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THE PRINCETON SEMINARY BULLETIN

VOLUME XXIII NUMBER 1 NEW SERIES 2002

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and Contemporary Understandings of Truth

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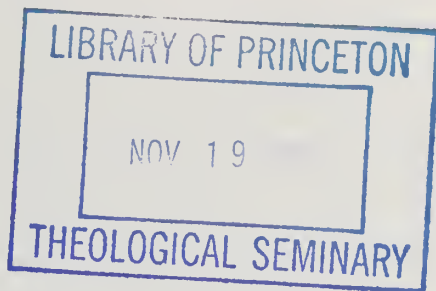
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VOLUME XXIII NUMBER I NEW SERIES 2002

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Loss, Lament, and Resurrection

THE AUTUMN OF 2001 will be remembered as a time of loss, lament, and resurrection. In the days and weeks following September 11, many in the Princeton area asked, "What is Princeton Seminary doing in response?" One answer to that question came in the form of a series of presentations on campus entitled "For Such a Time as This." We are pleased to publish five of those presentations in this issue of the *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*.

The most basic answer to the question is not what Princeton Seminary is doing, but what it has done year after year preparing the women and men who ministered to tens of thousands in the aftermath of September 11. One who prepared generations of students for this work has died. The Princeton Seminary community mourns the loss of Professor James Edwin Loder, who died on November 9, after over forty years of teaching. Excerpts from a service of witness to the resurrection in Miller Chapel on November 14, 2001, are included in this issue.

An article in the November *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* mistakenly noted that Paul Minear was deceased. We are happy to note that as of this writing, Dr. Minear is still very much with us.

STEPHEN D. CROCCO
EDITOR

Studying Theology in Apocalyptic Times

by THOMAS W. GILLESPIE

OT Lesson: Daniel 7:9-18

NT Lesson: Revelation 5:1-14

President Thomas W. Gillespie of Princeton Theological Seminary delivered this Convocation Address in Miller Chapel on September 18, 2001.

THE ADDRESS originally prepared for this opening convocation must wait for another time to be delivered. For we cannot begin the Seminary's one hundred-and-ninetieth academic year as though the destruction of the World Trade Center and the attack upon the Pentagon last Tuesday never happened. When I heard the news that terrorists had hijacked four commercial airliners and flown two of them into the Twin Towers in New York City, another into the hub of military operations in Washington, D.C., and the fourth into the ground in western Pennsylvania, my mind flashed back to Sunday morning, December 7, 1941. As a young teenager listening on the radio to the NFL championship game between the Chicago Bears and Washington Redskins, I heard those fateful words: "We interrupt this program to announce that Pearl Harbor is under attack by the armed forces of Imperial Japan." That event sixty years ago changed the lives of millions of Americans, even as our lives will be changed by the terrorism of September 11, 2001.

I

Who among us will ever be the same after watching over and over on television the two West Coast-bound jetliners plow into the side of those skyscrapers? Who will be able to forget the balls of flame and black smoke that engulfed those buildings upon impact, sealing the doom of all at work on the floors targeted, as well as many above and beneath? Whose dreams will not be haunted by the sight of fellow human beings leaping to their death from dizzying heights in order to escape the fire? Whose mind can comprehend the loss of human life that now numbers in the thousands or the pain of their families and friends? Whose thoughts will escape the memory of watching the Twin Towers disintegrate floor by floor into unimaginable rubble on the ground? What took thousands of workers six years to construct was demolished in less than two hours. Even we sophisticated, liberated, postmodern Americans, who have become enured to human pain and suf-

fering elsewhere in the world, cannot escape the enormity, the gravity, and the reality of the evil we have witnessed with our own eyes this past week.

But I speak merely as an observer to fellow observers. Let me share with you the words of someone who was on the scene. Donald Brown is a priest of the Episcopal Church and a spiritual director of our own Ellen Charry. What now follows are excerpts from an extended e-mail he sent to a select group of friends on Wednesday. With Dr. Charry's permission I read them to you.

I cannot sleep and so I thought I would try to put into words what I experienced yesterday morning. I was to be part of an all-day filming of a program by Trinity Broadcasting of meditations and dialogue with Archbishop Rowan Williams. So I got to Trinity Place at 8:30. We gathered in the parlor on the second floor for coffee and danish and were chatting [when] I noticed all these papers floating through the air. I went over to the window and looked up and as high as one could see there was paper floating down, sparkling in the bright sunlight.

A number of us went out onto the bridge that crosses over to the church and the sirens were starting to scream and traffic had stopped. The debris continued to fall and I picked up a memo from an office on the ninety-fourth floor of Tower 1. Someone on the Trinity staff told us the news that a plane had flown into the WTC and we assumed that it was a terrible accident. Once outside, we could see the plume of smoke above the building.

We went back in and joined hands for prayer and during that time the second plane went into the south tower which is one block from where we stood. The sound was unearthly and, at that point, we didn't know what it could be—probably a secondary explosion from the accident. But someone rushed in with news of the second plane and we were taken to the studio as the safest place. We were all very tense and a monitor was set up so we could watch CNN after Rowan Williams had led us in some prayer again.

It was after this that reports came in of the similar attack on the Pentagon and it began to be a little *apocalyptic* [emphasis mine]. After about 45 minutes, there began a terrible rumble and everyone threw themselves on the floor. It was a terrible sound and most of us thought that it was a bomb or, correctly, the collapse of one of the towers. But that is just a block and a half away and we knew the possibility that it could fall on us.

Finally, around 10:15 came the worst part. The wind was blowing from the northwest which blew the smoke and debris directly over Trinity. But around 10:15, the plume from the collapse of Tower 1 had passed and the

air was beginning to clear outside. So we were taken outside and this is where words begin to fail me. It was eerily quiet and we were the only people. I can only say it was like those movies that depict a “nuclear winter” following a nuclear *apocalypse* [emphasis mine].

There is more, but this is enough to give us the feel of the horror of it all. Thousands of others who were also actually in or around the World Trade Center or the Pentagon last Tuesday morning, of course, could tell similar stories.

What I wish to point up, however, is that when words began to fail, the author resorted to such terms as *apocalyptic* and *apocalypse*. Ordinarily those are terms used by biblical scholars to identify a genre of literature associated with middle Judaism and early Christianity. Theologians also use such language sometimes to speak of a particular way of conceiving eschatology. Thus, *Webster's New Encyclopedic Dictionary* defines the word *apocalypse* as “a Jewish or early Christian symbolic writing about a final cataclysm destroying the powers of evil and ushering in the kingdom of God.” But there is a secular sense to the word also, a sense limited to the phrase “a final cataclysm.” Father Brown used it in that sense to express his experience, as did the media in their own descriptions. In this sense *apocalyptic* is a synonym for *cataclysmic* or *catastrophic* with reference to “end-of-the-world” type events.

Now in addressing the topic of “Studying Theology in Apocalyptic Times,” I, too, am using the adjective in that sense—but only in part. For if cataclysm and catastrophe represent the whole of the times in which we live at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we might well conclude that there is no point in studying theology or anything else. Now that we know for certain how tenuous, uncertain, unpredictable, and unfair life can be, what sense does it make to prepare for a future that may well never arrive for us? Or now that we have been confronted undeniably and inescapably with the reality and power of evil, why bother to engage in “God talk” of all things? For if apocalyptic times make it easy to believe in the devil, they make it difficult to believe in God. Yet as one colleague responded to that comment at the faculty retreat last Friday, “More difficult, indeed, but all the more necessary.” That is why I refer to apocalyptic times only partly in the sense of cataclysm and catastrophe. What I have in mind tonight is that fuller vision of apocalyptic literature (at least that part of it that made the canon)—a vision that entails not only a radical recognition of “the powers of evil” but also the more radical hope of “the kingdom of God.” That vision puts the study of theology in a very different light.

II

Among academics, however, there is little consensus on the subject of apocalypticism. Not even on the definition of the term. John Collins, who teaches Old Testament at Yale's divinity school, seeks to clarify the concept in an important essay entitled "Genre, Ideology and Social Movements in Jewish Apocalypticism."¹ What is of concern to Professor Collins is "the propensity of scholars to select some feature of an apocalyptic writing that happens to interest them, and arbitrarily declare it to be the essence of 'apocalyptic' or 'apocalypticism.'"² He is particularly allergic to the use of these terms as theological concepts. Arguing that consensus on the definition of the terminology can come only when we accept the constraints of a specific body of evidence, he makes the methodological point that "the term 'apocalyptic' refers first and foremost to the kind of material found in apocalypses."³

Collins notes that there is general agreement that the primary distinguishing mark of the genre is that the material is presented as *revelation* (Greek: *apokalypsis*)—and hence the title. Further agreement is found in the recognition that under this term there are two basic types of apocalyptic literature. First there is the "historical" type, represented among others by Daniel and Revelation, that deal with the conclusion of history in terms of "the end of the world." Second is the "cosmic" type that is oriented to the notion of heavenly ascents where divine secrets about life on earth are shared.

Beyond that, however, the material found in this body of literature is so diverse that scholars find it possible to speak of a "common content" in only the most general terms. Among the authors cited by Collins in support of this assessment is Oxford professor John Barton, who concludes gloomily that "the attempt to find any unifying theme among the apocalypses that are extant is doomed to failure."⁴ Nevertheless, Collins contends that there is a "world view" that informs apocalyptic literature and makes it distinctive in the ancient world. It is "much broader and less specific than what is usually called apocalypticism in modern scholarship," he concedes. But he insists that it is not "significantly more ambivalent than other terms such as 'prophecy' or 'wisdom' that we freely use to characterize the ancient literature."⁵ So,

¹ John J. Collins, "Genre, Ideology and Social Movements in Jewish Apocalypticism," in *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium*, ed. John J. Collins and James H. Charlesworth (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 11-32.

² *Ibid.*, 12.

³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

bottom line, the argument here is that in spite of their enormous diversity in form and content, there is a genre of literature properly called apocalyptic that (1) is characterized by a common (although unspecified) “world view,” (2) falls into “historical” and “cosmic” types, and (3) may be identified by “the kind of material” found therein.

It is significant that Klaus Koch touched on all three of these points two decades earlier in his important monograph on *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*.⁶ Professor of Old Testament at the University of Hamburg at the time of writing, Koch focuses on the historical apocalypses and identifies eight “themes” that characterize this type. Together, he argues, they represent not what Collins calls a common “world view” but “something like a movement of mind” that informs the collective term apocalyptic when designating these documents. These eight dominant motifs are as follows:

- (1) An *urgent expectation* of the impending overthrow of all earthly conditions *in the immediate future*.
- (2) The end appears as a vast *cosmic catastrophe*.
- (3) The *time of this world* is divided into fixed segments predetermined from creation.
- (4) Earthly history is correlated to a supernatural and invisible history.
- (5) Beyond the catastrophe a new *salvation* arises.
- (6) The transition from disaster to final redemption is expected to take place by means of an act issuing from *the throne of God*.
- (7) This ascent to the throne is often connected with *a mediator with royal functions*.
- (8) The catchword *glory* is used wherever the final state of affairs is designated.⁷

Koch concludes, “All of this gives us the right to understand apocalyptic not only as a literary phenomenon but as the expression of a particular *attitude of mind*.”⁸

Now if these eight themes represent “the kind of material” found in the “historical” type of apocalypse, it is difficult to avoid the inference that what we have here are *theological* concepts. Consider, for example, the sixth theme—that of the throne of God. Koch explains that in the apocalypses like Daniel and Revelation “the transition from disaster to final redemption is expected to take place by means of an act issuing from

⁶ Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 18–35.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 28–33.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 33 (emphasis mine).

the throne of God." From there the final event will be initiated. This ascent of the throne is a relatively old idea in the Old Testament, he notes, and its importance is explained by the fact that "the throne is viewed as the indispensable foundation of sovereignty."⁹ Let me repeat that point: *The throne is viewed as the indispensable foundation of sovereignty.* In other words, basic to the "particular attitude of mind" that informs this type of apocalyptic literature is a radical view of *the sovereignty of God*. And that, I would insist, is a theological concept of the first magnitude.

But stubbornly to affirm the sovereignty of God in the face of unspeakable evil is by itself unhelpful. For if God is on the throne, how is it that cataclysmic catastrophes are allowed to happen? Here we face the age old *theodicy* question. As Archibald MacLeish framed it in his play *JB*, either God is good and not God, or God is God and not good. A good and sovereign God, in other words, would never have allowed this to occur. As one of our trustees put it on the telephone last Thursday, "I am looking forward to the board meeting in October because you theological types have some tall explaining to do. I find myself screaming, 'Come on, God, do something.'"

The Christian response to this is the affirmation that God has done something, is doing something, and will yet do something. That is why the apocalyptic theme of the throne must be connected with the theme of the mediator with royal functions. For the pertinent issue is *how God exercises sovereignty over this world*. The New Testament insists that God does so through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That is why the work of the late Ernst Käsemann is important for this consideration of the terms *apocalyptic* and *apocalypticism*. While Professor of New Testament at the University of Tübingen, he was prominent among those who annoyed John Collins by using these terms as theological concepts. In a 1960 essay translated into English later under the title "The Beginnings of Christian Theology,"¹⁰ Käsemann proposed the provocative thesis that "apocalyptic is the real beginning of primitive Christian theology," indeed, "the mother of all Christian theology."¹¹ He argued that in the light of the resurrection and under the influence of the newly given Spirit, the early church interpreted the life and death of Jesus in terms of the radical sovereignty of God and the royal functions of the messianic agent. "The heart of primitive Christian apocalyptic," he explains, "is the enthronement of God

⁹ Ibid., 31.

¹⁰ Ernst Käsemann, "The Beginnings of Christian Theology," in *Journal for Theology and the Church*, 6, ed. by Robert Funk (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 17-46.

¹¹ Ibid., 40.

and of his Christ as the eschatological Son of man."¹² Indeed, the "central motif" of this theological construction was "the hope of the epiphany of the Son of man coming to his enthronement"; and despite the nonfulfillment of this "immanent expectation," Käsemann wondered "whether Christian theology can ever make do, or be legitimate, without this motif which arose from the experience of Easter and determined the Easter faith."¹³

Scholarly opinion since has not been kind to Käsemann's proposal. His reconstruction of the history of the primitive church in terms of a confessional struggle between "nomists" on the one hand and "enthusiasts" on the other, each represented by Christian prophets claiming the inspiration and authority of the Spirit, has justifiably not fared well. Particularly his attribution of certain *logia* in the Synoptic tradition to these prophetic figures on the basis of formal criteria has proven untenable. But still those apocalyptic themes of the throne of God and the mediator with royal functions in the establishment and exercise of the sovereignty of God are deeply embedded in the witness of the New Testament. And given our experience this past week, with the reality of evil at work in a *catastrophe* of historic if not cosmic proportions, the second apocalyptic theme identified by Koch suddenly and unexpectedly becomes quite credible. Surely Christian theology can never make do, or be legitimate, in this context without the themes of the radical sovereignty of God and the exercise of that sovereignty through the cross and resurrection of his royal agent, Jesus the Christ. And that will require of us in our study of theology certain adjustments in our "attitude of mind."

III

For some, perhaps for many if not for all, the adjustment required will be nothing less than an appropriation of the apocalyptic "attitude of mind" itself—that "movement of mind," as Koch also calls it—that orients itself to the sovereign *theos* whose own *logos* to us makes it possible for us to respond to God and to speak of God aright. In the first of his final academic lectures in Basel, which he later delivered here at Princeton Seminary, Karl Barth declared:

Theology itself is a word, a human response; yet what makes it theology is not its own word or response but the Word which it hears and to which it *responds*. Theology stands and falls with the Word of God, for the Word of God precedes all theological words by creating, arousing,

¹² Ibid., 43.

¹³ Ibid., 46.

and challenging them. Should theology wish to be more or less or anything other than action in response to that Word, its thinking and speaking would be empty, meaningless, and futile.¹⁴

Now the point is not who said that. So do not believe it or dismiss it because the author was Karl Barth. The point is that it represents an appropriate "attitude of mind" in the presence of the God who ascends to the throne and exercises sovereignty over the earth through his chosen mediator.

I do not presume to speak for each of you, but I tell you that when I witnessed the implosion of the Twin Towers last Tuesday morning and realized the number of people who were losing their lives before my very eyes, I did not want to hear from the announcer or the political pundits who would soon fill the airwaves. I did not want to hear from the President of the United States or the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Defense. In that moment I wanted and needed to hear God speak—the interpretative word, the redeeming word, the hopeful word. And so have countless others who turned immediately to the churches for impromptu prayer services.

Last Wednesday afternoon I spoke with Dr. Thomas K. Tewell, pastor of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City. He told me that the day before they had opened the sanctuary for prayer services at 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, and 7:00 p.m., with over fifteen-hundred people pouring in from off the street. He commented that he began each service with these words from Psalm 46:

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

Dr. Tewell reported that after each service many people told him how much those opening words had meant to them and asked what the source of the quote was. So many, in fact, that they began to mimeograph the scriptures being used and make them available. His final comment was, "They went like hotcakes." Of course they did. For thousands of years now those who have ears to hear, those who honor God's sovereignty by giving God priority in the process of divine-human communication, have heard the voice of God mediated through the testimony of the scriptures. And those who embrace an

¹⁴ Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 16-7.

apocalyptic “attitude of mind” know how to listen in studying theology before they speak.

Yet I confess that as powerful as the Psalms and the other scriptures turned to this past week are, they are insufficient apart from the death and resurrection of the one who mediates God’s sovereignty over the world through the cross and empty tomb. Someone told me that there was a television shot of the disaster area from a perspective that had the cross on the steeple of the First Presbyterian Church in New York City in the foreground. It gave the impression that the cross was an actual part of the scene. I believe that was more a theological reality than a photographic illusion. Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall puts it this way in *Lighten Our Darkness*:¹⁵

The theology of the cross declares *God* is with you—Emmanuel. *He* is alongside you in your suffering. *He* is in the darkest place of your dark night. You do not have to look for him in the sky, beyond the stars, in infinite light, in glory unimaginable. He is incarnate. That means he has been *crucified*. For to become flesh, to become one of us, means not only to be born but also to die, to fail. But it means that *he* has been crucified; and therefore that the way of the cross, which is in any case our way, need not be regarded any longer as producing negative results. There may be after all a kind of expectancy that is not extinguished, but actually springs into life through the experience of negation.

Such expectancy is occasioned and warranted, of course, by the resurrection of Jesus. Theologically, Professor Hall emphasizes, the last word of the gospel *is* one of triumph. Triumph *is* of the essence of the story. That cannot and should not be denied. But what kind of triumph? Not the triumphalism that minimizes the cross—or the destruction of last Tuesday—but the triumph of faith that lives under the sign of the cross in hope, the cruciform faith that compels us to continue our service to God amidst the tragedies and catastrophes of this world.

If we do in fact believe that God reigns over this world and exercises sovereignty in and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, then our “attitude of mind” will allow us to sing with assurance such hymns as:

Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

¹⁵ Douglas John Hall, *Lighten our Darkness* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 149f.

Such assurance not only frees us but compels us to study theology—to think the faith, to take it seriously as a matter of life and death, to deal with its tough intellectual and moral issues, to try our level best to get it right—not that we may enjoy the luxury of being right over against others, but that our ministries may be effective in these apocalyptic times, that our witness might be redemptive for particular people in their particular life situation. You who are entering or returning students are not here to obtain top grades and prove thereby, as Dean Armstrong is fond of saying, that you are good at going to school. You are here to prepare for ministry, the ministry of the gospel, the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Crucified, Jesus Christ the Resurrection, Jesus Christ the living Lord. Amidst great tragedy God is giving you both his permission and commission to study and to learn for the long haul, so that you may become useful even—no, make that *especially*—in apocalyptic times.

The Liturgy of Seminary Life

by DAVID A. DAVIS

NT Lesson: Romans 12:1-8

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IT LOOKED LIKE Easter morning at the church last Sunday. There were no extra flowers but the pews were packed. People went looking for a church that morning. It was like Easter without the trumpets. Joy was nowhere to be found. The events of a week ago yesterday morning turned this past Lord's Day into something like the dark side of Easter, not quite the antithesis of Easter. But it was Good Friday content with Easter Sunday crowds.

When I leave the sanctuary at the close of worship I walk down the aisle to take my place there at the door. I guess I usually walk with my head down and my eyes gazing at the floor. This Sunday, for some reason I found myself looking into faces as I headed for the front steps. There were faces turned down with eyes closed. Faces that looked straight ahead. Faces that looked to the sky. Some faces spotted with tears. Several faces met mine along the way. Some of those faces are very familiar to me. They are every week faces. They sit in the same place. I have been invited into their lives. I am their pastor. I have been carrying the image of a few of those faces, carrying the images around in my mind these last days.

A woman on the left is part of the first couple I married when I arrived at the church. Her husband called me at home Saturday night. He had been on reserve duty and was already in North Carolina. It looks like he will be staying there for a while. The couple on the end, there on the right, they just arrived home from their summer in New England. They sent me an e-mail about their daughter in Memphis. She is having surgery for a brain tumor tomorrow. The little four-year-old girl half way out into the aisle smiles at me. Her grandmother died three weeks ago. Her mom told me right before the service that she had asked if grandma would be at church today. A young woman about half way back in the middle had been in a meeting in the second tower to be hit. The descriptions of what she has been trying to erase from her memory are chilling. And there in the back, on the right, that man was widowed all too soon last month when his wife died suddenly. Retirement together was a year away. He is sitting in the pew by himself for the first time.

How can we ever forget what people go through to come to worship? The aisle over there at Nassau Church is not that long! That was one trip! Three

days ago! Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam offers some conclusions about religious participation in his recent study of "the collapse and revival of American community." The volume, *Bowling Alone*, should remind all scholars and preachers that titles still may be important. Putnam's chapter on religious life includes statistics about church membership, church attendance, and religious beliefs. The conclusion is not particularly profound. "Americans are going to church less often than we did three or four decades ago." But statistics cannot describe what I saw in those faces as I left the sanctuary on Sunday. Robert Putnam does not address what people go through to gather week after week. He cannot really. He does not have the language. The motivations. The desires. The response. The relationship with the Almighty. It is the worship life of the people of God.

"I appeal to you by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect." It is a call to worship; Sunday worship and beyond. It is a call to a life of worship. Chapter 12 reads like one of Paul's precept papers. He had the notes ready to go on the life of discipleship: do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, one body-many members, gifts that differ. And in the verses to follow: let love be genuine, do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord, rejoice in hope, persevere in prayer. The note cards are flying off the scribe's desk. Bless those who persecute you. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. You know the verses. They ring in your ear. But before it all, present yourselves holy and acceptable to God. The life of faith framed by living sacrifice. A thesis statement of worship. Present yourselves in response to God. Worship as a way of life.

In chapter after chapter here in Romans the Apostle Paul tackles that which makes theologians proud. The gospel as the power of God. The role of the law. A discussion of sin. Righteousness. Justification by faith. Dying with Christ. Life in the Spirit. That affirmation that nothing shall separate us from the love of God. The question of Israel. The grafting in of the Gentiles. The essence of Paul's scholarly, theological rhetoric. The heat of debate comes in Galatians. The exhortation to community comes in Ephesians. The hymnody to Christ comes in Philippians. But here in Romans the church stands up to our eyeballs in the theological grist for endless study. And right smack in the middle of it all Paul turns to all the students and the theologians gathered, the community of scholars who serve the faith and says, "Therefore I appeal to you sisters and brothers in faith, to present your bodies, your minds, your work, your lives, as a sacrifice to God."

It is an intriguing image for seminary life, really. Some of you have thought about the purpose of theological education for decades. Others of you find yourselves some place along a journey of learning. It may be that all of this is about doing theology, or preparing for ministry, or imparting wisdom or nurturing faith, or serving the church, or cultivating scholars, or thinking theologically. Seminary may be all of those things. And the Word of God breaks into your study and your thinking and your writing and calls you to worship. Seminary life is an act of worship, a holy and acceptable response to the mercy of God.

My summer reading included David Brooks' book *Bobos in Paradise*, a captivating study of what he defines as the upper class, educated elite. The term "bobo" refers to the unique qualities of a generation that reflects the wealth and success of the bourgeois and the counter-culture values of the bohemians. His description of a typical "bobo" town reads like a stroll down Nassau Street. He begins a chapter on spiritual life this way:

I'm sitting on a rock in the Big Blackfoot River in western Montana. The sun is glistening off the water, and the grasses on the banks are ablaze in their fall glory. The air is crisp and silent and I am utterly alone . . . This is the spot where Norman Maclean set and Robert Redford filmed "A River Runs Through It," and I'm sitting here waiting for one of those perfect moments when time stops and I feel myself achieving a mystical communion with nature. But nothing's happening . . . I look at my watch and realize I had better start feeling serene oneness with God's creation pretty soon. I've got dinner reservations at six.¹

The defined spirituality of a Bobo does not cut it when it comes to the life of faith, when it comes to a lived response to the grace of God, when it comes to worship. Worship is a response. Worship is an offering. Worship is the work of the people in the power of the Holy Spirit, according to scripture, and by God's grace. It is more than your feelings. It goes beyond what you can create. It is not about one of those perfect moments framed forever on your wall. It is not about singing only the songs that please you. It is not about waiting for something to happen. Which is to say, the Apostle Paul's call to worship is less about you and more about God. Talk about a threat to the church, this self-centered expectation of what is good and acceptable worship. Yes the death and destruction and suffering drove people to their

¹ David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 218–9.

knees last week. Those faces I carry, they have taught me over the years something of what it means to present yourself as a living sacrifice. I sit up there week after week and know what they go through in order to worship; through the joy and the despair which is life. And when we talk theology and lament the state of the church, when you sit around the tables at lunch and solve the problems of the world and the church and the seminary, I wish you could see those faces.

About fifteen years ago I started my last year of seminary and if someone would have asked me what I would miss most, I would have talked about friends, summers off, those brief periods between semesters. I may have mentioned a class or two, or described an environment where you can ask and learn. Last week if you asked me that question, I would have told you that I missed the privilege of wrestling theologically with the events of the world. Because frankly, I did not have time and I thought I would have been preparing for a dozen funerals. So I am not sure what you think you may miss. Over those years, what I have missed most is being a part of a community that could worship together every day. To think that on last Tuesday this community could gather by 3:30 in the afternoon, and that this community had a place to gather . . . It is such a gift. Maybe you cannot appreciate it. Frankly, I am not convinced all the members of the faculty appreciate it. But I do not think you will ever have that gift again. A community that can be so rooted and grounded in offering yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, that you might be transformed by the renewal of your minds, to discern what is good and acceptable and perfect.

So is it the corporate worship of the community of faith? Or is it worship as a way of life; that everything from study, to community, to service is an act of worship? We come to the table and join with that great cloud of witnesses, the church in all times and places, we come at the invitation of our Savior, and we gather round, praying, "accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving as living and holy offering of ourselves."

The answer becomes clear. Is it the worshipping life of the community or is it worship as a way of life? Here at the Table the answer is before us.

The answer is yes.

Theologies of War: Comparative Perspectives

by MAX L. STACKHOUSE

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IN TIMES LIKE these, we must look at basic concepts of religious ethics that have shaped our social history and are shaping our present situation. We must look at these religiously-based concepts because we have been shocked into the renewed recognition that religion shapes the fundamental motivations of peoples and guides their actions more than our secular analyses admit—indeed, more than the ordinary believer who has been acculturated into a tradition fully knows. Thus, we turn not only to those motifs that are frequently accented in worship to deal with our quest for meaning in the face of absurdity, and to honor those who have suffered, sacrificed, and lost their lives; nor do we turn only to the classical dogmas as they seek to spell out the systematic content of our beliefs by turning our minds to truths about good that are beyond the present evidence of evil, but we turn to those theologically-informed ethical motifs that can guide our sense of responsibilities in society in times of crisis. These are not always addressed directly by piety or dogma, although life under God's care takes place in social, political, economic, familial, and professional spheres of society, and our traditions develop patterns in these spheres of life that predispose our social histories. Indeed, in a day of global influences, including the globalization of terror, we must try to survey, understand, and evaluate these issues from a comparative point of view, even as they clash.

Religion is, in ways that many analysts have ignored, the core inner logic of cultural and social traditions. Each religion shapes its host society over centuries and draws some of its religious insights from the historical experience of the societies that host it. Yet, religion always points to that which involves at least a claim about transcendence over society, even though it is also inevitably embedded in a particular social history. The relative transcendence allows it to selectively embrace, reject, or refine aspects of the culture of which it is a part, according to the deep presuppositions and inner logic of the reigning religion itself. From this vantage point, religion inevitably

shapes widely held values, inclines institutions toward some and not other dominant patterns, and establishes in the mind of the people, and often in the law, various ideals of the right and the good that are not fully operational in society. The precise normative shape of the deepest presuppositions is ever in dispute, of course, for there are disagreements within each religious tradition and most societies have more than one religious tradition within them. In this respect, it is not unlike schools of thought in academia, disputes of principle among political parties, competing convictions as to artistic excellence, or various alternative approaches to medicine or law. Still, the one that comes to dominance in a civilization because it is most able to form and sustain the institutions of the common life is the one that is most able to shape the deepest presumptions about truth and justice, the views of the right order of the regime, the concepts of the correct form of production and distribution in economic life, the characteristic patterns of child rearing that become typical of particular cultures, the artistic expressions of conviction, and, indeed, the attitudes toward war and peace.

When we begin to compare the religious ethics of various traditions, we find that there are a great number of areas that tend to overlap or converge, even if there are other areas that tend to clash. Where there are disagreements, it is important to assess whether these are of high importance so that they must be settled, or whether the differences are incidental and thus do not involve basic contradictions that would induce social implosion, unbearable inner tensions, or religious collapse. If there are disagreements that genuinely threaten religious commitments and moral fabric, it is not surprising that violent conflict breaks out. As George H. Williams once said: "Religion is high voltage, it can energize or it can electrocute."

Ordinarily, the great religious ethical traditions of the world and the great civilizations that they spawn share a common commitment to peace. We can see that in the way in which the key terms for peace are honored in most religious and cultural traditions—*shalom*, *eirene*, *salem*, *pax*, *mir*, *Friede*, and their international counterparts. With slight nuances, they all refer to a state of minimum conflict, the relative absence of coercive force, and the practice of nonviolent resolution of conflicts—all guided by a pervasive sense of justice or equity that is integral to the morals, manners, dispositions, and practices of the common life. In this past century, several icons of peace have been greatly honored—Albert Schweitzer, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Theresa, the Dalai Lama, to name key examples who come from different religious backgrounds. While none are angelic in all respects, many see them as, in some regards, model figures. In contrast, people of many faiths have also adopted negative icons of those who have initiated war,

destroyed cultures, and undercut the prospects of a viable society by subverting peace with demonic forms of violence—Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, and a host of local tyrants.

At the same time, there are heroic figures who are known above all for their conquests that showed not only military prowess, but the defense of threatened peoples or the expansion of cultural horizons when cramped possibilities inhibited human development. Think of the Spartans at Thermopylae, of Alexander the Great, Charlemagne, Joan of Arc, or Winston Churchill, to cite only some memorable figures from the West. Few churches, temples, monasteries, religious orders, or mosques have not celebrated the sacrifice of those who have given their lives for the protection of their loved ones, their country, and their faith. For while all seem to know that peace is good and that destructive violence is evil, most also recognize that there is at least an episodic need to fight the forces of evil in order to establish the relative prospects for a just peace that are possible in human history. The questions become when, and how, and under what kind of religiously-legitimizing justification, and under what conditions, and to what ends should they do so. Today, three basic theories of war are in contention, and it is important that we engage in the exploration and, in some measure, the comparative assessment of these three views. I refer, of course, to those of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

The “Peoples of the Book,” as the Muslims say, share the fact that they are religions of revelation. That is, they hold that at the center of their faith is a divine disclosure of truth and justice. The disclosures transcend the capacity of humans to discover, invent, or infer by the empirical observation and rational analysis of life. Indeed, they all claim that God has taught humanity how to live in the midst of life’s evils and wrongs in ways that humans could not find or construct alone. This applies also to the use of violence, and this is what we shall survey.

I. JEWISH ROOTS

The deep roots of all these traditions are in the Hebrew scriptures. In Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Deuteronomy, we find the idea of the Conquest as a duty under God. God as the “Lord of Hosts” accompanied the Hebrew warriors as they carved out a new space for themselves in a land inhabited by others. This idea has echoes in later Judaism, in Christianity, and in Islam, and is sometimes called “Holy War,” although it has taken various forms as we shall see.

The basic plot is familiar: after a long period of subjugation under Pharaoh, the Children of Israel were led on an exodus out from under their slavery by Moses. After wandering in the wilderness for many years, and being formed into a new people under a Holy Law given by God, they were commanded to take possession of the land that God promised them. In the process, it was understood that God would be with them and approve their deeds. As the lore has been taught for centuries, Joshua fought the battle of Jericho and Gideon blew the ram's horn to call the warriors to battle against those who occupied the land. Moreover, when others threatened the land that was taken, Samson took the jawbone of an ass and slew the enemies of Israel. Later, Saul, the troubled warlord, and then David, the shepherd boy who defeated Goliath, were anointed as kings to establish a new political order to secure both the religious ethic, the new society, and the land. Under David and his successors, a major policy change established a standing army—although echoes of the older tradition were preserved and reappeared in the stories of the Maccabees centuries later.

The old warrior ethic had significant ethical contours to it. In fact, under the impact of Zionism and the reestablishment of Israel after World War II, extensive and detailed rereadings of those ancient texts were undertaken by modern Jewish scholars. On the basis of their research, a number of modern Israeli leaders developed the ideas of "the sanctity of arms" (*kedusbat haneshek*) and "purity of arms" (*tobar haneshek*). This is the idea that when the people or the faith are under threat, it is a "holy duty" to take up "righteous" arms to establish a safe society in the promised land.

The "holy duty" is not to be undertaken in the name of some general or king to whom loyalty is pledged. Nor are they to fight for booty or career. The purpose is not human aggrandizement, but God's purposes and sovereignty. Moreover, the idea that God is the Lord of Hosts does not only mean that God is with the hosts of warriors as they take up righteous arms to defend a people under threat, but that there are limitations on how they should behave as a company of servants of the divine will in the midst of history's conflicts. Like their ancient forbears, they are to maintain ascetic discipline in matters of piety, sexuality, diet, and sanitation. Moreover, they are not to indulge in personal hate or retribution against the enemy. "Vengeance is mine," saith the Lord. Combatants may be tough-mindedly calculating in the determination of "military necessity," but personal cruelty is forbidden, for if the former is understandable to both sides, the latter breeds lingering hate. These provisions were not invariably observed either in ancient Israel or in the Zionist reconquest and formation of modern Israel. In the ancient texts, for instance, we have examples of soldiers triumphantly

smashing the heads of the babies of the enemy against a stone. And David exploited Uriah's dedication to the old ethic by commanding him to fight in a way that assured his death, so that David could indulge his attraction for Bathsheba—who apparently put herself in a position to attract David while Uriah was under ascetic discipline. Moreover, the people began to celebrate the empire David was constructing, and began to celebrate his victories instead of the Lord's sovereignty. "Saul has slain his thousands, but David has slain his ten thousands." All this meant that David, once the very model of a priest-king who established a measure of security and peace, could not build the temple he had planned. He had unjust blood on his hands—a fact that evoked prophetic criticism. Nathan, the first of the prophets after Moses, courageously stood before the king and condemned him. In contemporary life, some Jews both within and beyond Israel have also been prophetically critical of Israeli policies and of the unjust blood it has shed—a fact that has, does, and must play a role in international affairs and the policy decisions of every major power in the current situation. While it is, arguably, not the task of religious ethics to set public policy, it is its task to remind all parties of the larger, deeper issues, and as necessary to speak prophetic words of protest against evil. Indeed, to speak of prophecy leads us to both Christianity and to Islam, for they are also heirs of the prophetic tradition and have developed concepts that overlap with the idea of "righteous" arms. We shall here take Islam first, for it is closer to ancient Judaism on this point.

II. ISLAM

The term that is often used in Islam for "holy war" is *jihad*. It does not, however, necessarily mean holy war. The root of the word is *jabada*, which means "to exert oneself" or "struggle"—especially to achieve good or defeat evil. Characteristic ways in which this exertion takes place are within the heart of the believer, for the uplift of society, and in intellectual argument to defend the truth and justice of Islam ("the *jihad* of the pen") against its detractors. These uses are peppered throughout the Qur'an and the *hadith*, although they seem to be most pronounced in those parts which derive from the early period in Mecca. In this context, Muslims were to fight only when provoked, in self-defense and in defense of the new revealed faith, although they were to practice *jihad* in these other ways. When Muhammad was driven out of Mecca, however, he had to defend his fugitive band of believers in Medina, and later felt commissioned to expand the reign of Islam over surrounding territories and peoples. The term also came to be used for military conquest in every *dar-al-barb*—"domains of war" in territories or

among peoples where Islamic rule is either not acknowledged or overtly repudiated, rejected, blocked, or defiled. Such a domain differs from the *dar-al-Islam*, a territory where Islam and its peace prevails, or, in some interpretations, is at least given due respect and place—as, for example, British India or most Western pluralistic societies where Muslims can build mosques and practice the faith with full civil liberties.

In several interpretations of the *hadith*, the collection of traditions about Muhammad and his life, teachings, and leadership, and in the *sharia*, the Islamic form of civil and religious law, however, there are indications that the more military meanings of *jihad* have been given a priority, for it has been sometimes assumed that able-bodied men will take an active role in expanding the rule of Islam over the entire world. And, indeed, the history of Islam for several centuries was one of expansion by *jihad*. In this case, Qur'anic instructions to "raid in the name of God" and to "slay idolators wherever you find them. . ." have episodically gained priority in the service of the prophetic expectation that not only pagans, but Jews and Christians should become Muslims. Certain traditions of interpretation, most notably the Wahabi tradition of the last two centuries that has militantly recalled the glory years of ancient *jihad* that, they believe, established a pure Islamic form of governance, have added modern secular views of truth and justice, which they see exemplified in the West, to that list. They see themselves as agents of bringing all to submission. Indeed, "submit" is the root meaning of "Islam," with the corollary that all who submit are "Muslims."

And to what are all to submit? Above all, they are to submit to Allah, whose very thoughts are set forth in the Qur'an as delivered by Him through Muhammad. It is this aspect of Islamic thought that inclines many to identify Islam, and not only its most militant groups, as constitutionally "fundamentalist," although this term was clearly developed in the West to apply to a particular, heretical mode of Christian thought that involves a "divine dictation" theory of the Bible. In fact, however, this view of revelation is closer to the juridical traditions deriving from Mosaic traditions of revelation than to those deriving from Christian ones. Moses received the commandments of God and brought them to the people. He did not himself in any way compose them. Indeed, the *hadith* suggests that Muhammad could neither read nor write, so he could not have done so. The content of the Qur'an is closer to the kind of revelation portrayed by Moses on the mountain than to that given in the accounts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. At Mount Sinai we find a radical monotheism with a divine-dictation understanding of revelation, in the latter we find the roots of what became a Trinitarian view of God, and a characteristic recognition of human agency in the composition

of scripture. The first words of the New Testament Gospels are "The Gospel according to Matthew" followed by others "according to" Mark, Luke, and John. And these books are followed by many letters "of" Paul, Peter, Timothy, etc. These are held to point authentically to the living word, Christ, and not only to the words themselves as thoughts of God. Although Christians accept the Ten Commandments and other direct "words" as authentic disclosures of God's laws, purposes, and mercies, and seek to be guided by them, Christians also recognize the interplay of divine inspiration and human authorship in the midst of an ongoing revelation in human life and history and an internal pluralism in the very being of God.

However, Islam differs from Judaism in at least one major respect. Neither the ancient Hebrews nor modern Judaism seek to convert the world—even if they are convinced that they are to be "a light to the nations." In this the Old Testament heritage is more like many primal religions, and like Hinduism and Confucianism insofar as they develop great spiritual and ethical teachings that can edify all, but do not press toward the conversion of all to their faith. Islam does, and in this regard can be seen partially as ancient Judaism gone universalistic. In this it is more like Buddhism and Christianity, which are also universalistic in aspiration. These three religions are constitutionally missional; they think that they have a message that can be, should be, and even must be taken to all the world for its salvation. This has created one of the critical issues for Islam. In its first several centuries, it did spread rapidly—largely by conquest in the name of *jihad*, but also by the relative superiority of its moral and spiritual vision compared to many fractious, animist, and pagan traditions it surpassed or absorbed. Indeed, after the death of Muhammad and the rise of the Caliphite tradition of Islamic empire, the Muslim traditions spread by *jihad* not only east through Persia and Afghanistan to the borders of China and India, but north into the Balkans, and west across North Africa into Spain. It was, to be sure, stopped temporarily in France by Charles Martel in 732, but continued its expansion elsewhere. Over time, it created a complex civilization with highly developed art, literature, philosophy, and science that clearly surpassed the medieval West and rivaled the great empires of Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian kings to the East.

But at the height of its powers, it began to falter. Not only the divisions between Sunni and Shi'ite traditions divided it internally—bringing a great split in the fundamental theory of succession and leadership, but El Cid began the repelling of the Muslim rulers in Spain in 1080. The Roman Catholic Pope about that same time also called for the knights, princes, and kings of Europe to mobilize a Crusade to defend against Islamic expansion

and to recover the Holy Land. Several were undertaken over the next two centuries, some of them harshly bloody and others merely disastrous, although it is clear that the Christian West was, in part, revitalized by its common effort, its contact with Islamic culture, and the opening of trade routes that gave access also to India and China.

Some hold that the Christian Crusaders learned their sometimes rapacious techniques from the previous *jihad* tradition of the Muslims, but one would be hard put to assess which side was most vicious in these brutal encounters. Still, Islam continued its growth over the next several centuries primarily by extending to the East into what is now Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Southern Philippines and the South toward Central Africa—now more by the influence of Sufi traders than by conquering warriors. Those who know Islam in this mode, know it mostly as a religion of spirituality and peace. Of greater world-historical significance is the fact that Islam's expansion was, in fact, basically stopped in the West. The West began itself to expand, in spite of Islamic efforts to engage in a reconquest of the West in resurgent efforts that led to the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the attack on Vienna in 1683. Subsequently, the Christian West sent missionaries to most of central, southern, and eastern Asia as well as Africa. They also sent colonizers and modes of medicine, science, and technology that, for the first time since the height of Islam, surpassed that of Muslim culture. When the Ottoman Empire, the last of the great Caliphite regimes was overthrown in 1924, only residues of the unified theocracy remained—the Saudi, Jordanian, and Moroccan kings, plus the scattered Emirates and Sheikdoms stand as pale echoes of the old grandeur in spite of the international wealth that flows to them on the undertow of the industrialized West's need for oil.

Moreover, Protestant forms of the Christian democratic West pressed, on theological grounds, for the desanctification of all political orders, the separation of "church" and "state," the nurture of Enlightenment values such as scientific methods in all things, the full education of women, the equal rights of all religions, the freedom of the press, the historical-critical study of sacred texts, and the subordination of religious law to international standards of constitutional law. These "modern" developments, as they hit Islamic society, proved to be extraordinarily disruptive.

While many proximate factors surely influence the contemporary rise of militant, fundamentalist Islam, the longer and deeper drift of history has cut channels of shame, insult, and challenge to the most sacred convictions of Islamic prophecy. The creeping doubt as to whether the revelation and prophecy are really true evokes apoplectic reactions to the suggestions, by lapsed Muslims such as Salmon Rushdie, that it may not be, entirely. And

when the West protects such intellectuals and scholars, supports the establishment of a Jewish state engaging in a "reconquest" in the midst of Islamic peoples, tilts toward India where resurgent Hinduism has also repudiated Islam, or encourages what is viewed as sexual freedom and cultural liberty through an "enlightened" media that is almost unavoidable anywhere in the world, and then support Islamic political leaders who lead dissolute, secularized lives while oppressing their subjects who fall further into economic, cultural, and intellectual sloughs of despair, a rebirth of militant, virulent forms of *jihad* is quite unsurprising. The extent of sympathy for the rebirth of militant *jihad* from West Africa throughout the Arab world to East Asia, and the gleeful, barely-muted empathy from the ideological factions who joined the recent liberation movements against Western hegemony is extensive.

Yet it is not at all settled as to what this rise of *jihad* movements means. Is it a Reformation of Islam—a populist turning back to scripture and disciplined morality against the waywardness and pretense of most official representatives of the tradition? Is it a theocratic parallel to those "heaven stormers" of the Radical Reformation who wanted to institute the Kingdom of God on earth by force? Might it be like certain of the "Cathari" movements in late medieval Catholicism or certain pietist movements in the later Reformation that democratized the residual feudalism of the West? Or, is it possibly comparable in any way to the Ku Klux Klan and the White Supremacists in America who claim the symbols of Christianity as their own, but who have been disowned and repudiated by major Christian bodies and the constitutional, democratic societies that they have engendered?

We may not be certain, but we do know that the terrorist actions these *jihad* movements have perpetrated cannot be passively accepted by Christian theology or ethics, by the non-Christian traditions that, like Christianity, seek a just peace, or by societies that hope to claim a religious or moral legitimacy.

III. CHRISTIANITY

For all the continuities of Christianity with Ancient Judaism, signaled by the early demand of the church that the scriptures must include the Old Testament, there has been, in principle, no accepted doctrine of "holy war." That is not to say that some Christians did not invoke Imperial power to protect the faith, or that some in the Crusades did not seek to legitimate their actions by appeal to the "conquest texts," or to undertake behaviors that have close similarities to the most militant Islamic practice of *jihad*. Clearly they

did. This can be seen also in Christian pogroms against Jews, among Conquistadores against the Indians in Latin America, during the wars against Native Americans in what is now the United States and Canada, and by European believers who settled the land in southern Africa, not to mention the entire colonial experiment. But key aspects of the Christian perception of reality cut against this temptation and not only make these practices anomalies in Christian ethics, but helped prompt the protest against these very actions—which were seldom uncontested. In fact, Christians have long acknowledged that such actions demand a confession of sin, even if they were undertaken with “the best intentions,” for they violate the first principles and the ultimate purposes of God as understood through Christ.

It is also the case that Christianity does not have, or even claim to have, a complete social philosophy. It is not a tribe or an empire, even if some believers have acted tribalistically and imperialistically. While every area of life is touched and guided by the faith, and while much is drawn from the Hebraic traditions, much has also been drawn over the centuries from the social and historical experience of other peoples—not only the Greeks and the Latins, but the northern Europeans, the Slavic Lands, and, increasingly, that of the developing peoples around the world. It is a continuously growing tradition, as the history of theology makes clear. In each of these areas, Christians have sought to enter public life, to participate in political, economic, cultural, and even military life, not only with a clear conscience, but with a sense of Christian duty. Christians with the capacity and opportunity to lead have a responsibility to establish, so far as it is possible in human affairs tainted by sin, a viable just peace and to resist, with force if necessary, the forms of unjust violence that erupt out of that sin. And insofar as Christians undertook this responsibility, they began to articulate the terms on which this can and should be done—terms that can be found in such theological giants as Augustine, Thomas, and Calvin, and in more elaborated form since.

While some strands of the tradition rejected such participation and adopted a stance of “pure spirituality” and pacifism (e.g., some Gnostics, many monastics, and, among Protestants, the “peace churches” [Mennonites, Brethren, Quakers, etc.]), the main traditions of the Christian churches have developed the doctrine of “just war and unjust war,” a doctrine similar to what the later Jewish tradition called “righteous arms” and to some aspects of the Islamic tradition when it speaks about justifiable self-defense. The most important implication of this development is that Christians are called to take responsibility for the common good, to shape the polity toward a just peace, in ways that may include the assumption of public offices. This protodemo-

cratic impulse runs deep in the tradition and gave rise not only to the election of pastors and bishops, but eventually, to modern "secular" polities in which believers are also citizens, and which may also include direct participation in those political, police, or military spheres of life where the use of coercive, even lethal force could be required. Although there are various ways of articulating this common theme, the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican, Methodist, and some Baptist Christian traditions tend to share it.

To call this teaching a "Christian" doctrine does *not* mean that war, if conducted in the name of Christ or Christianity, is just. Nor does it parallel in status certain other Christian doctrines which attempt to spell out the best way to think about complex matters of faith. Rather it is a set of assumptions, principles, and conditions that are intended as moral maps by which we can find our way through the thicket of ethical, empirical, and spiritual issues to guide us if and when life presents the possibility that coercive force may have to be utilized.

The primary assumption is this: God wants everyone to live in peace, and to be nonviolent toward the neighbor near or far. The just war theory, in this presumption, recognizes the insight of the monastic and the peace church believers, who know that war is always a departure from the way humanity is intended to live by God. But it demands recognition of the facts that we cannot live in pretended innocence in this life, that violence erupts in the midst of human history, and that sometimes the use of forceful means is necessary to overcome that violence and reestablish the relative peace that is possible. Christians account for this eruption of violence by a doctrine of "The Fall" (into sin), which is not shared by the Jewish and Islamic traditions. Most Christians hold that this doctrinal assumption gives Christianity a more realistic assessment of both human nature and the prospects of human history than is present in its sister traditions. It means also that most Christians have been sharply critical, even punitive, toward the Gnostic and "peace church" traditions when they hold that pure believers can attain a spirituality that is above the struggles for a just peace in history, or that the community of faith can and should embody a kind of holiness that is most virtuous when it denies a duty to engage in the responsible ordering of the common life, and thus to engage in the use of force. Such believers and churches, according to the majority tradition, are parasitic on the larger civil society where God also reigns in principle and where God's laws and purposes are also to be approximated. God is not only concerned about the pure heart or the holy church, but the course of human history and the redemption of the world.

The chief principles that guide those who are seeking to discern whether or not to use coercive means (*jus ad bello*) can be stated in this way: Because of the presumption of peace, the turn to coercive means must be a *last resort*. Alternative ways to resolve the dispute must be explored with patience. Of course, in the case of an immediate attack, when life, welfare, and the faith that holds the culture together is under threat, a response of self-defense or counterattack is warranted. All this is to say that it must not only be a last resort, it must be a *just cause*. Of course, a person or a community cannot simply claim that it is a just cause, it must be a defensible claim—one that would hold up to public scrutiny. That is why, in the face of the recent attack, it is justifiable for the world community to ask the U.S. to give credible evidence that we know who is behind the attack before they will judge the reaction to be justifiable. Further, the response must be by *legitimate authority*. It is not for some independent militia or angry mob to take such actions upon themselves; the use of coercive force demands the existence of a viable political order. What authority is legitimate is not always easy to discern—as, e.g., the African National Congress argued against the regime of South Africa. Decisive here is the fact that the question of what kind of an authority is legitimate—both in the legal *and* the moral sense—must be engaged, a question that implies the existence of an accessible transcendent norm, a knowable higher moral law than the positive law or social convention. And, even if this is determined, practical calculations have to be made: One is whether there is a realistic *hope of success*; a just peace is not established by futile suicide. The other is that a case has to be made that *more good than harm* is likely to come of it—no just peace is aided by actions that make the problems worse.

Supposing that all the demands of these principles are met, it is still not judged moral to engage in war by any and all means. While the lust for victory in a justifiable war may lead to such a temptation, the doctrine demands that conditions are put on the action as it is engaged (*jus in bello*). Legitimate authority must *announce the conditions* under which action is to be undertaken. Opponents are thus offered options to change their course of action. Even then, every effort must be made to *discriminate between combatant and noncombatant*, even if the enemy hides among civilians, and in engaging combatants and the machinery intended for use in the war by them, *proportionate force* must be used. One ought not, as the saying goes, “burn the house to kill a mouse.” Still further, even in the midst of battle, and most certainly when prisoners of war are captured or disarmed, combatants must *treat the enemy as human*. Torture, mutilation, mass execution, vengeful retaliation for past ills are clearly ruled out. Finally, victors must *confess their sins* if they have

contributed to the causes or conduct of the war, and seek ways at battle's end to *take steps toward reconciliation and the establishment of a just peace*. This does not mean that the aggressors in the war cannot be punished, it means that the eternal replaying of old conflicts breeds new ones. Even if we cannot forget the tragedies of the past, we can reach toward, or invite, the holy gift of forgiveness.

Many of these provisions have been embodied into international law, for they capture something of universal significance in bringing a decent civility to police and military action. Clearly they played a role in many recent conflicts, were used to foment "just revolutions" in the process of decolonialization, and to protest against nuclear weapons during the Cold War—as was forcefully stated in the U. S. Roman Catholic Bishop's pastoral letter on the subject. And now, we face the issues again—this time not against a nation, but in a conflict with an extralegal network that lives under the protection of an illegitimate government and claims divine sanction. In my view, the Christian doctrine has provided a universalistic basis on which to shape the moral consensus of the world's nations. The justifications for going to war are clear. Whether we can conduct the war with the simultaneous patience and restraint needed to keep it just remains an open question.

It is not the role of any state to conduct a holy war, for no state can be holy. Neither can or should the church attempt to engage in holy war. It has other, nonviolent purposes. But the church can and should draw on the deepest, widest, and most Godly theological traditions it can discover and offer legitimating guidance to a nation or an international consensus when it is on the right track, warn it of the dangers that it is likely to encounter, and engage in prophetic criticism when it is off the track. Indeed, and this is most difficult for many to grasp, it can and must seek to assess the relative adequacy of relative claims to prophetic insight that seek to legitimate a world historical movement. While we engage in the justifiable attempt to defeat or constrain terrorist violence, we must also take on the deeper, more difficult, and much more subtle task of trying to discern whether, or in what measure, the revelational claims of Islam are valid. Is it true or false prophecy? That is beyond the confines of this comparative analysis; but it must go on the theological agenda.

The implications are, quite likely, decisive for our attitudes, actions, and policies in this century.

Religious Perspectives on Our Present Crisis: Response to Max Stackhouse

by ELLEN T. CHARRY

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TO BEGIN, I must say that I am, in a way, pleased to be here and in another way not pleased to be here. I am pleased because I think the calamitous events we have experienced call Americans to stop and think self-critically about the circumstance that we are in. We need to ask ourselves some hard, overdue questions about what may be our own inadvertent or unrecognized contributions to the anger expressed toward us in these bombings. To put it sharply, I suggest the attacks on our centers of might and power be interpreted as a wake-up call. We see now that we do not understand others, especially our Muslim neighbors with whom we share this planet. Perhaps our power has seduced us into believing that we did not need to understand them. Such a wake-up call is a good thing. I hope that that discussion will not be lost in the midst of other concerns.

I am not pleased to be here because I do not want to be talking about war, although it may be needed at this moment. I would much rather be talking about how we, as the world's greatest power, promote world harmony. The American wake up call I refer to is the truth that American culture and economy offend people around the world. Offensive itself would not be that serious if we were not ubiquitous. For even as American products and styles offend, they arouse jealousy and seed social, cultural, and religious confusion and unrest. American materialism and consumerism are a blessing and a curse both for us and for those to whom we export them. Facing up to this paradox is most appropriate for a theological school training religious leaders. I hope we will have another opportunity to begin serious stocktaking of the seamier and more destabilizing effects of the American lifestyle and foreign policy that others may see more clearly than we do. Christian discipline calls for regular self-examination, repentance, and reform. Therefore, American Christians cannot simply wave the American flag and ignore the effects of America on other world cultures.

That being said, our topic, the ethics of war is important, for we need to understand each of the protagonists in the drama that has caught us up. The first learning then, is that we do not understand all the protagonists suffi-

ciently to make informed judgments about what we should do and how we should respond. To begin to understand the very complex dynamics that my colleague has begun talking about, we need to understand our global neighbors as they understand themselves. Further, we must strive to allow them to teach us how we appear to them, that we may learn from their distrust of us.

Prof. Stackhouse is quite right to frame this calamity in religious terms. I will follow his lead to indicate further some of the delicate issues that arise from the theological dimensions of military and political conflicts. In terms of Islam, our greatest unknown, the place to begin is by reading the Qur'an. There is no substitute for understanding the foundational document that inspires those Muslims whose ire burns against our nation.

Second, although Judaism is less unknown to us than is Islam, we may not understand it as well as we might. The material in the Old Testament from Deuteronomy through the two books of Samuel is well worth rereading, as Prof. Stackhouse has suggested. While the terrorist attack has been against U.S. territory, the conflict it represents involves Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The national history of the Jewish people in the Deuteronomistic writings is central to this conflict. An important caveat is needed, however. Although the Qur'an is sacred scripture for Muslims, and the Deuteronomistic history is sacred scripture for Jews, these texts do not function analogously in those communities. That is to say, Islam is to the Qur'an as the Hebrew Bible is *not* to Judaism. There are no easy parallels here. This is to say that Judaism and Islam both have, as Prof. Stackhouse correctly said, interrelated textual authorities. Sometimes these are hierarchically ordered. Islam has the Qur'an, the *sharia*, and the *hadith*. Judaism also has a hierarchical understanding of the authority of its canonized texts: the Hebrew Bible (Tanak), the midrashim, and the Talmud (the Mishnah with the *Gemara*).

With perhaps 800 million Muslims in the world, one can readily expect that they will not all agree on the weighting given to these various authorities. The discipline of interpreting Islamic law and tradition is central to the community's structures of organization. The same, actually, is true of the Jewish religion. Different interpreters will have different hermeneutical rules for interpreting various texts written, codified, and canonized over the course of centuries. Different legal scholars will naturally render different judgments, depending on their hermeneutical ordering of the sources.

Keep in mind that Islam has never had what we in the West call the Enlightenment, in which ancient inspired scriptures were recognized to come down to us through human agency. Therefore, for Muslims, the Qur'an is the very words of the angel Gabriel spoken to the prophet Muhammad.

Judaism, on the other hand, transformed the biblical witness through the interpretations of its sages from an early date. That is to say, to understand the Hebrew Bible is *not* to understand Judaism. Judaism is not the religion of ancient Israel as depicted in the Christian Old Testament. Jewish belief and practice cannot be assumed from Old Testament texts about divinely authorized military conquest. That is a very important point here, because my colleague suggests a Jewish foundation for the Islamic notion of *jihad* that also functions as the rationale for modern Israeli warfare. Theologically speaking, Christians can, of course, feel free to draw their own Christian conclusions from their Old Testament, because they lay claim to Israel's scriptures. However, from a history-of-religions or comparative-religion perspective, Judaism must be approached in its own terms. We must be clear about which hat we are wearing when we speak of these matters.

As for Judaism, first, it has no widely-recognized teaching on war *per se*. There is no Jewish equivalent of *jihad*, holy war, or holy struggle. It is true that the Deuteronomic history reports that God led Israel into war against its enemies and authorized conquest of foreign lands in order to fulfil the divine promise of land to Israel. This however, is quite different from *jihad*, which is a judgment made by the aggressors that the struggle for the honor and dignity of Islam rests on their shoulders. Muslims are the defenders of their faith. The Old Testament presents God as commanding war against Israel's enemies.

Next, Prof. Stackhouse uses the word "doctrine" here as American policy spokespersons use it politically, as in the Monroe Doctrine, or the Reagan doctrine. Now, one can use the word "doctrine" in that sense. But to Christian ears, "doctrine" carries heavy theological freight. In the Christian case, the opposite of an approved doctrine is incorrect doctrine, sometimes called heresy. Christian theological doctrines such as ecclesiology, pneumatology, Christology, hamartiology—the stuff of Christian belief—are not equivalent to a biblical or rabbinic teaching or opinion on a subject like war. There is tremendous room for misunderstanding here.

The sense in which Prof. Stackhouse is using the word doctrine is, I think, closer to the ancient Greek meaning of *doxa*, meaning opinion. The fact that words appear in some codified text, say the Mishnah or the midrashim, does not give them the force of authority in Judaism that formalized doctrines have in Christianity. Jewish authority lies in Jewish law, and the law works according to the majority vote of the sages on any given subject, with minority opinions usually recorded in the text. An individual sage's minority opinion becomes part of the inherited tradition. It does not have binding authority, nor is it anathematized should it become unpopular.

Now recently, some extremist militant Jews have reverted to reading the biblical texts unfiltered through the midrashic and talmudic filters that ordinarily reshape scripture's plain meaning. This is highly uncharacteristic of Jewish thought. They raise the flag of the whole land of Israel that God promised to Israel in the Deuteronomistic History or claim the geography of the Davidic kingdom at its imperial height. In addition, they identify current Arab inhabitants of this ancient territory with Israel's biblical enemies. Scouring the texts and reclaiming midrashic phrases about armaments to authorize their beliefs and actions is certainly their right. Yet, patching together a program that calls on divine promises and a blood-seared past has no enforceable authority within Judaism. Such persons are free to use their powers of persuasion (and of course contemporary technology) to enlist supporters to their cause, in the name of the ancient sages(s) being cited. They speak, however, only for their own interpretation of the tradition, their own party. I repeat, there is much room for misunderstanding when it comes to the common use of the term "doctrine." Vast and ancient traditions undoubtedly have room for extremists in every case. That, however, should not be thought to represent the main teaching of a tradition.

Before suggesting other ways of furthering Prof. Stackhouse's observations on the religious dimensions of the conflict, there remains some unclarity or confusion regarding the frame of reference of this discussion. By talking about the grounds for war in the three great western traditions, Prof. Stackhouse has framed the discussion as an exercise in comparative theology. This is an important descriptive task, essential to further understanding for making informed judgments. Yet, by addressing the three traditions, not in chronological order (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), but in an order that appears to normatize the Christian view (Judaism, Islam, Christianity), he seems to have switched roles in midsentence so-to-say, and is speaking as a Christian theologian. I have already suggested the inappropriateness of seeing the biblical view of divinely commanded war as the foundation of Islamic *jihad*. Of course, as a Christian theologian, he has every right to argue for the superiority of Christian just war theory. We must be clear, however, when we are taking up the role of observer and when the role of theologian, so that we do not promote confusion rather than clarity.

I am speaking here as an observer, an historian if you like, of comparative theology in order to help clarify our situation, before making judgments. It is not that I do not also have theological convictions about these matters, but that I think that at this early stage we are best served with as much descriptive accuracy as we can muster.

In this vein, let us remember that Americans are not in a religious war, even if Muslim extremists are. President Bush has declared a war on terrorism; it is not a war on Islam. Nor is it a war on the Arab world. It is a war on certain individuals who have taken to terrorist action out of a certain frustration with contemporary political and economic circumstance, backed by certain religious interpretations of their tradition and their sacred texts. Therefore, it is all very complicated, as Professor Stackhouse rightly pointed out. Let us proceed in our quest for further clarity.

I noted just now that Americans are not engaging in a religious war, even if the terrorists who attack us are. Islam does not know of the separation of mosque and state. Islam never admitted that modern division that we now assume. They do not understand our way of thinking because they have not experienced it, and perhaps, to our dismay, do not want to experience it. Neither do they understand our easy ability to have a state that is not religiously grounded and to have religious convictions that are not expressed through state action.

For its part, Israel lies somewhere between these two positions. Classical Judaism, like Islam, knows no distinction between ecclesiastical and state authority. Yet, because Israel was created by the modern western powers who do operate under the notion of the modern, democratic, secular state, and because Israel's founders came from modern western Europe, the Jews who made the state, many of them secularists themselves, accepted, in part, the terms of modern democracy.

Yet Israel itself is not really a democratic secular state, like the U.S. or western European states, because it was established as a Jewish state. This ambiguity has proven to be highly consequential for Muslims living in Israel, and for their brothers throughout the Islamic world who regard Israel as theologically illegitimate.

Therefore, when we want to understand people from another part of the world in which religion plays a different role in society, we need to stop still. We must not only listen to what they may be saying to us; we must discern what they see and hear when we speak and act. We must discern how they see us so that we can interpret their reactions to us without distortion. It is important here to resist reaching for our own categories and conceptual frameworks of interpretation, as if they worked in cultural and religious settings quite different from our own. Unless we exercise this restraint, and undertake such courses of study and discernment as are called for here, we could fall into traps that compound rather than address the problems that have risen up to meet us.

Following the recognition that Israel and the Islamic states function with a different “church”-state structure than we do, we can begin to see what this all looks like from an Islamic perspective. I suspect that one of the issues facing Muslims now comes from what I read as ambiguities in the Qur’an regarding non-Muslims.

Just as we must distinguish a war on terrorism from other types of conflict, Muslims must determine what type of conflict this is from their perspective. They too must be clear about their enemy. Now, it looks as if this is conceived by some Muslims as a war against America. Since Islam does not have the notion of a secular state, it has no category for Americans because we are not a People of the Book. Islam, as Professor Stackhouse said, does recognize “Peoples of the Book,” however. That gives Jews and Christians a status vis-a-vis Islam, but that does not help us as Americans. This is quite an important point. Islam recognizes Jews, Christians, and idolaters, and in some passages of the Qur’an all three categories seem to run together to form a general category of non-Muslims. It is not clear how Jews and Christians are to be distinguished from heathen. (Jews and Christians have precisely analogous problems, by the way.) Those are the three categories that exist for it because Islam is a religion, not a nationality. From an Islamic perspective, everyone must fit into one of those categories, and Islam is to prevail both militarily and religiously over them.

At the same time, one of the questions pressing Islamic states around the globe is how they see and deal with the United States as a political entity having citizenry with many religions no one of which controls the state. Watching Muslims look at us in this light may be clarifying for us, since we are uneasy about how we hold our religious commitments together with our democratic beliefs. It would not be surprising if Muslims think us confused. For example, some Americans still think this is a Christian nation. Others think it once was a Christian nation but is so no longer. Some people are most pleased at this, while others are dismayed by it. Others think that this has never been a Christian nation and never should be. Not only Christianity, but also all religions should be kept from public expression. After all, religion is one of the most dangerous things we have ever invented. It is often tied to war and conflicts of which this is a case in point. So, for some people, the sooner this country stops being a religious nation or pretending or trying to be a religious nation, the better off America and the world will be.

Pride in our secularity, however, only gives Muslims more cause for dismay. Moreover, given this disagreement among ourselves, how are Muslims, seeing us impose our secular, market-driven ideology on them, to understand us? If we are a heathen nation, we should be under Islamic

control. As Professor Stackhouse has said, Islam is a militant religion that believes that the whole world should be Muslim, just as some Christians believe that the whole world should be Christian. (Few Jews think the whole world should be Jewish.) Still, Muslims are to respect religious freedom of conscience, and not authorize or permit religious coercion. Muslims believe that Islam should be offered to conquered peoples, but those individuals have a right to say no to Islam. They can remain as minorities within an Islamic state with civil disabilities imposed upon them. Most Jews and Christians who have lived under Islamic hegemony in this manner have not always had the happiest experience, however. They are not free to worship in some Islamic countries, for example, contrary to Qur'anic principle, among other serious social and civil disabilities.

While it may be Muslim destiny to rule others, for Muslims to live under the control, even remote control, of American foreign and military policy or the reach of American market interests may be seen as contrary to the will of God. It is both the fact that America is the world's leading power and the fact that we use that power for our own ends that offends and infuriates Islamic sensibilities.

In a somewhat different, though analogous setting, for example, Muslims currently living under Israeli rule in a Jewish state, are in an utterly upside-down world that has no theological legitimacy. For, from an Islamic perspective, Muslims should be ruling Jews, not the reverse! Israel, the greatest military and economic power in the Middle East, is perceived as an extension of American, western hegemony. This is, let us say it one more time, both a theological offense and a political humiliation from an Islamic perspective. Perhaps this is one reason why the Middle East conflict remains so implacable. For Muslims, this is not only an economic, geographic, and cultural struggle. It is a struggle for the honor and dignity of God.

Now, Muslims living in this country occupy a unique space. Every cultural and religious group that has come to these shores, whether voluntarily or involuntarily has been changed by the American experience. Muslims here have obviously agreed to live under our system of secular government. However, since it is a system for which Islam has no parallel, Muslims in America must think through for themselves how they are to live Islamically in a democratic secular state. Jews and Christians have had to do the same. As the American Muslim experience lengthens and matures, these citizens, like all those who preceded them will see themselves less an outpost of home, and more at home, in a civic and social setting to which Islam must accommodate. The events of September 11 have already begun having that salutary effect.

One of the great benefits of this development for America will be that the Islamic critique of American culture will become internalized. That is, it will become part of the American self-criticism with which I opened this response. America may need some of the criticisms that the terrorists, in their distorted desperation, are trying to offer us. Yet, by placing themselves beyond the pale of human decency, they have both betrayed Islam and disserved their cause. Now it remains for their wiser and calmer brothers to take up their task in ways that truly serve God the merciful.

Probing the “Meaning” of September 11, 2001

by WILLIAM STACY JOHNSON

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ON THE MORNING of September 11 between 7:45 and 8:10 a.m. Eastern Standard Time, four commercial jetliners were hijacked by religiously-inspired terrorists who then launched a carefully coordinated attack on targets symbolizing the financial and military might of the United States of America. At about 8:48 a.m. the first aircraft, which originated in Boston, Massachusetts, slammed into the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York City, engulfing the building in flames. Some fifteen minutes later a second jetliner, also out of Boston, ripped into the Trade Center's south tower. Although the steel-reinforced frames of the buildings were built to withstand the impact of a plane, they were nonetheless caused to melt by the intensity of the burning jet fuel. At 10:05 a.m. the south tower dramatically collapsed, followed by a similar demise of the north tower at 10:28. That afternoon at 5:20 p.m. a third building collapsed, leaving a sixteen-acre site of devastation in the heart of New York City's financial district. The fires from among the ruins could not be fully extinguished until almost one hundred days later.

Yet New York City was not alone. A third aircraft that had taken off from Dulles Airport in Washington, D.C. that same morning crashed into the Pentagon at 9:43 a.m. killing all on board and many on the ground. And yet this was not all. Passengers on a fourth aircraft that had departed from Newark, New Jersey also found themselves hijacked. Having been alerted by portable telephones of the events that had earlier transpired in New York and Washington, these passengers decided to take matters into their own hands. They voted to engage the hijackers with the intent of stopping them from turning yet another American civilian jet into a deadly missile. There was a skirmish, and the plane went down into an open field in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, killing all on board. Presumably, had the passengers on this fourth flight not intervened to stop the hijackers, this plane too would have been used to wreak destruction on another high-profile symbolic target.

People throughout the nation and around the world watched all this horror unfold on television in “real time.” Many of us here in Princeton had friends

who were actually there—some of whom witnessed the events firsthand, and others of whom lost their lives. Although the death toll for all four events was originally thought to approximate 6,000 people, the current estimate (as of January, 2002) is 3,161 lives that were lost that day.¹ As a point of comparison, the most that died in a single day in Northern Ireland in all the past thirty-two years of conflict was thirty-three in a coordinated set of car bombings in 1974. In addition, people from more than thirty nations were killed on September 11, including not only citizens from the United States but large numbers from Britain, Germany, Belgium, South Korea, and Japan. Whereas Japan lost twelve people in 1995 when the religious sect Aum Shinrikyo released sarin gas in the Tokyo subway, there were two-and-a-half times that many Japanese killed in the World Trade Center on September 11. In short, September 11 was not merely an American catastrophe but an international catastrophe whose ripple effects are still being felt.

Though Americans too often rush to demonize the "Other," every indication is that these attacks were planned and carried out by a terrorist network headquartered in Afghanistan known as al-Qaeda, led by the expatriate Saudi Arabian, Osama bin Laden. A religious zealot and the disaffected scion of a wealthy Saudi Arabian family, bin Laden is accused of masterminding this and other terrorist incidents against American interests around the world over the last decade, incidents including the 1992 bombing of a hotel in Yemen where U.S. troops were staying (2 killed); the World Trade Center Bombing of February 26, 1993 (6 killed); the 1993 attack on U.S. soldiers in Somalia (18 killed); a 1995 attack on U.S. military headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (6 killed); the 1996 bombing of U.S. military barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia (19 killed); the bombings of two U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, August 7, 1998 (224 killed); and the Oct. 12, 2000 attack on the U.S.S. Cole in Yemen (17 killed).² Bin Laden and his group are reported to have been especially incensed by the presence of "infidel" American soldiers on Islamic holy soil ever since the 1991 Gulf War. Since then, as the death tolls just quoted indicate, al-Qaeda has ratcheted up its terrorist violence, maintaining that all American civilians

¹ The official estimates are: at The World Trade Center, 2,937 dead or missing, including 147 dead on the hijacked planes; at the Pentagon, 184 dead or missing, including 59 dead on the hijacked plane; and in Pennsylvania, 40 dead. *The New York Times*, Wednesday, January 2, 2002, page A10.

² For a chilling (though still incomplete) chronicle of terrorist incidents over the last forty years, see "State Department Chronology on Terrorist Incidents 1961–2001," Office of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State, November 8, 2001.

are appropriate targets of terrorist acts and vowing to strike American interests again and again.³

September 11 marked an event of terrorism that carried terrorism itself to new levels of homicidal destruction. Complex though it was, what happened on September 11 is best categorized as an event of man-made mass death. In naming an event in this way, we seek to ferret out meaning and to formulate an appropriate response. Some have named September 11 a "crime," implying that it should be handled within the conventions of domestic and international criminal law.⁴ Yet this was a "crime" that has pushed the investigative and enforcement capabilities of the criminal law beyond their ordinary limits. It was a crime that was more than a crime, the sort of crime that rises to a new level. It is not claiming too much to call it a "crime against humanity." For that reason, others have resisted the epithet "crime" and want to understand September 11 as an act of "war." Indeed, warfare language has been invoked by the terrorists themselves, who speak of an act of *jihad*, or "holy war"—a religiously sanctioned struggle. Even so, it differs from other modern acts of war. This is not a contest between belligerent nations, each seeking territorial security or wealth; rather it is a struggle between different visions of what is real. Yet at the same time these differing visions of reality cannot be reduced to anything so neat or simple as Samuel Huntington's "clash between civilizations."⁵ We should resist the conclusion that the Christian West is being pitted in some straightforward way against the nations of Islam. Instead, this is a struggle between forms of modernity and forms of anti-modernity, a struggle in which the boundaries run not just between civilizations but across them and within them.

All this to say that the event of September 11 rang ominous. Just as the First World War marked a departure from the "gentlemanly" conflicts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the unleashing of "total" war, so too September 11 may have ushered us into an era when we are never not at war. Or more accurately, this new type of war has been all around us for years but it took September 11 for those of us in America to see it clearly. And what we see is chilling. Just as the Second World War reached its dreadful climax with

³ See the Fatwa issued by Osama bin Laden, "Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders," World Islamic Front Statement, February 23, 1998.

⁴ Perhaps this confusion between "crime" or "war" explains the difference of opinion over President Bush's executive order calling for detention of terrorists and trying them before military tribunals. See President George W. Bush, Military Order: Detention, Treatment, and Trial of Certain Non-Citizens in the War Against Terrorism, November 13, 2001.

⁵ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

Americans dropping two atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, so also September 11 has threatened to make weapons of mass destruction the instruments of choice for anyone with enough cash and enough hatred to want to be killed in order to kill. Noam Chomsky may have a point when he observes that what was different about September 11 was its turnabout: now the weapons of mass destruction were being aimed at "us."⁶ September 11 was more than just another case of religiously-sanctioned terrorism. As opponents of modernity, the perpetrators of September 11 took modernity's own saddest legacy—the legacy of man-made mass death—combined it with the worst legacy of pre-modernity—a hatred of the "Other" born of religious zealotry—and turned them both in a deadly new direction.

In short, September 11 not only brought international terrorism to America's doorstep; it brought the reality of man-made mass death there as well. Comparing the September 11th deaths of thousands of Americans and others who were aligned with the West to the millions upon millions of victims of genocide around the globe may well seem narcissistic and self-serving. By no means should this juxtaposition be allowed to deflect self-critique or obscure American responsibility for violence in various parts of the world. Technically, September 11 was not an act of genocide.⁷ Nevertheless, there are good reasons to classify it as an act of man-made mass death, and classifying it as such helps bring something of its sinister "meaning" into focus. It was an act of mass death, first and most obviously, because of the numbers involved. Thanks to the World Trade Center's evacuation plan; to the bravery of rescue workers in both New York City and Washington, D.C.; and to the courage of passengers of the ill-fated United Airlines Flight 93, the actual death toll was much lower than it might have been. Still, on September 11 the lives of tens of thousands of civilians were placed at risk, with some estimates running as high as 50,000 people under direct threat, almost as many as were killed in the entire Vietnam War. Such large numbers are significant, and with more than 3,000 having been actually killed, September 11 qualifies as one of the most heinous one-time mass slaughters on modern record. Second, the perpetrators themselves have publicly declared their intention to kill

⁶ Noam Chomsky, "The New War Against Terror," Technology and Culture Forum, MIT, October 18, 2001, transcription from voice recording.

⁷ The term "genocide" was coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944 to signal the deliberate and methodical killing of people within an identified ethnic or people group. See Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment, 1944). In 1948 "genocide" was made a crime in international law. The law recognizes that genocide includes not only acts of killing but other violent or coercive acts, including maiming, causing mental duress, preventing childbirth, or transporting populations for purposes of ethnic cleansing.

civilians and to turn all Americans into potential targets of death. In addition to his fatwas directed at killing American civilians, a video tape that was released on December 13, 2001 showed Osama bin Laden reveling in what happened, indicating he had considered in advance how many civilians might have been killed, and showing intimate familiarity with details, including the names of the hijackers. Third, we can say with confidence that this was an event of man-made mass death, because it was nothing less than an act of death for death's sake. The point was to kill and to destroy. No clear warning was given; no clear demands were made. This was simply an act of wanton destruction, wreaking havoc for havoc's sake.

I. AN EVENT THAT RESISTS "MEANING"

The mass killing of human beings—whether real or threatened—has become the hallmark of our postmodern, post-Holocaust times. We have seen it erupt not just against the Jews of Europe but against the tens of thousands exterminated in the killing fields of Cambodia; the estimated 800,000 hacked and maimed in conflicts between Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda; the thousands upon thousands targeted for "ethnic cleansing" in the former Yugoslavia, including the massacre of 7,000 Muslims in Srebrenica during the month of July in 1995, and on and on.⁸ As with the nightmare of the "Sho'ah" or so-called "Holocaust" of the European Jews, such is the horror of this event that we have taken to naming it through a circumlocution—"the events of September 11," just as historians now speak of the "near-destruction of European Jewry during the years 1933–1945" instead of the loaded word, "Holocaust." Not unlike the ancient refusal to speak the divine name,

⁸ Of the many books on these subjects, see (on the Holocaust): Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1985); (on Cambodia): Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), and William P. Deac, *Road to the Killing Fields: The Cambodian War of 1970–1975* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 1997); (on Rwanda): Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), Mahmood Mamdani, *Why Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); (on the former Yugoslavia): G. Scott Davis, *Religion and Justice in the War Over Bosnia* (New York: Routledge, 1996), Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804–1999* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2000), Jan Willem Honig, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997), Tim Judah, *The Serbs: History, Myth, and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), idem, *Kosovo* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), David Rieff, *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), Marcus Tanner, *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

such circumlocutions suggest that we are in the proximity of something both awesome and terrifying.

One of the clearest lessons to emerge from the *Sho'ah* is that events of massive evil will not succumb to shallow explanation. To assign them a "meaning," or to seek to justify slaughter of this type by way of a theodicy borders on blasphemy.⁹ It will not do to attach meanings to the event that circumvent the raw anger, pain, and protest that those who survived rightfully feel.

In his provocative book, *The Writing of the Disaster*, Maurice Blanchot wrestles with how one is to put into words the "meaning" of such catastrophic events.¹⁰ He explores the paradox that one can only write about "disaster" from the standpoint of having been a survivor, or at least of having come into the presence of survivors. That is, we can speak of a "disaster" only because what occurred was something short of an absolute disaster. Something terrible happened, but the rest of us live on. Yet, at the same time, the disaster is something that no one ever fully escapes, least of all the survivor. There is a sense in which the disaster keeps on happening, keeps on being relived and reconfigured in memory—even though there is always something that memory is in no way able to retrieve. "Ground zero" is not so much a place as a vanishing point, the trace of that which is irrevocably lost.

Inevitably, however, the disaster still instigates a search for "meaning." "Suddenly summoned to witness something great and horrendous, we keep fighting not to reduce it to our own smallness." That is the way John Updike began an essay in the September 24, 2001 edition of *The New Yorker* magazine in which he was asked to make sense of September 11. To those of us who are theologians and pastors, the dilemma Updike wrestles with, of describing events that are beyond our powers of description, strikes a familiar chord. For as purveyors of religious "meaning" we are called upon regularly to speak from the ankle-deep shoals of our own limited understanding about life's most important matters. Scarcely can we find the words from out of "our own smallness" to do justice to the deep things about which we are called to bear witness. As we strive to get at the meaning of things that are

⁹ The paradigmatic statement is Richard Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1966). The author issued a somewhat more moderate statement twenty-six years later: idem, *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992). For a summary of the anti-theodicy literature "after Auschwitz," see Zachary Braiterman, *(God) After Auschwitz: Tradition and Change in Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

¹⁰ Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

much bigger than we are, we feel ourselves "suddenly summoned" to speak with wisdom and profundity.

Yet for Blanchot, if the disaster could be said to have a "meaning," that would be the worst thing of all. The worst kind of "wisdom" would be the kind that domesticates the devastation or seeks to explain it. By explaining events we seek nothing more than to explain them away. To assign catastrophe a "meaning" is to do no more than to prescribe an anodyne; for, in a way, an explanation is a certain kind of escape.

So then, what are we to make of the widespread search for explanation that commenced on September 12? As soon as the dust had settled from the destruction of September 11, people began pouring into houses of worship asking, "Where was God?" Some of the answers given to this question were themselves highly questionable.

Claims of having been miraculously spared abounded. People attributed the fact that they happened not to be in the World Trade Center that day to divine intervention, forgetting that in making this attribution they were implicitly leaving to God the determination that all the others had been preordained to die. Are we to say that God was content for Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, which used to stand across the street from the World Trade Center, to be swept away, but that God's desire was for St. Paul's Chapel and Trinity Episcopal Church to be spared? An example of the absurd lengths to which our religious rationalizations could be pressed emerged when Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson attributed a good measure of the blame for September 11 to the so-called godless liberals of the ACLU, the feminists, and others who happen to differ from their tightly wound definitions of what God wills. We do well to remember that the leader of the terrorist band, Mohammed Atta, also pressed his religious convictions in blame of others, believing that a heaven of fleshly delights awaited him because of his willingness to kill and be killed in the name of his twisted version of Islam.

More than ever, after September 11 we should be aware of the dangers of religious belief. Here again, Blanchot is illuminating. He writes, "One comes to believe in nothing through a need to believe in too much and because one still believes too much when one believes in nothing."¹¹ It is a strange fact that some of those who speak the loudest and the most aggressively about religion are themselves hovering close to the brink of nihilism, operating according to the perverse logic that unless their own narrow set of overbeliefs are found to be true in all particulars, then there can be no truth at all. If this

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

jot or that tittle of the Bible is not literally true, they reason, then all biblical truth must be suspect. Because they believe "too much," any chink in the armor of their belief leads to the fear that civilization itself will come crashing down. Indeed, if worst comes to worst, they will bring it crashing down for us. Perhaps this is why there is so much violence in religion. For the fundamentalist—whether a fundamentalist of the right wing or the left wing—it is all or nothing, which means that those who disagree must be reduced to nothing. Yet to affirm the other side, the "nothing" of this either/or is also, according to Blanchot, to claim to know "too much." An absolutism of either the "yes" or the "no" misses the interplay of yes and no that all life exudes.

Is there not a way in which the widespread question we heard after September 11—the question "Where was God?"—contains more than a hint of this belief in nothing? In one sense, no doubt, to feel a certain perplexity and even repugnance at God's failure to prevent such disastrous events is a deeply human reaction. Similar questioning we see going on in the Psalms, in Lamentations, in Job, even in Jesus' cry from the Cross, and in every place that human suffering has cried out for answers. Yet in the modern world this inquiry has taken on quite a different intellectual edge. The biblical sense of God's entitlement to be who God will be (cf. Exod 3:14: "I am that I am, I will be who I will be") has given way to a different sensibility—also biblical, but now interpreted with an urgent new anthropocentric twist—of a human entitlement that God can in no event let us down (cf. Exod 20:2: "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the house of Egypt, out of the house of bondage").

It is good and right to believe in the divine promise, to trust in the faithfulness of the God will not let God's people down. Yet trusting in God's promises is not the same thing as clinging to a particular vision of their fulfillment, as though we expected particular outcomes as an entitlement. The newfound American sense that "we can have it all," a sense that permeated the 1990s and culminated in the birth of the new millennium, was shattered on September 11. In significant part the events of that day were aimed at American and international financial institutions, some of which had headquarters or major offices in and around The World Trade Center. Because of this, American financial markets were physically unable to be reopened until September 17, and when they did, the Dow Jones Industrial Average finished down a frenzied 7.12 percent, or 684.81 points in a record one-day point loss, while the S&P 500 closed down 4.92 percent and the Nasdaq ended 6.82 percent lower. Much of this loss was recouped in the weeks that followed, spurred on by more interest rate cuts by the Federal

Reserve Board and military successes in Afghanistan. Still, it would be wrong to underestimate the sense of financial and personal vulnerability that the events of September 11 engendered. When the Houston-based energy corporation Enron collapsed some weeks later, it had everything to do with over-leveraging and aggressive accounting and little to do with September 11; and yet the spectacle of seeing how quickly such a former repository of financial strength could be brought to nothing only added to an ever-growing sense of the fragility of all things.

In his many writings Emmanuel Levinas has made it clear that the way we frame the question, "Where was God?" often displays an erroneous conception of who God is and how God relates to the world. It presumes that God is somehow lurking "behind the scenes" of human history waiting to intervene on our behalf. Instead, for Levinas God is calling for something to happen in the world right here at this very moment.¹² God is at work by calling something forth in the lives of human beings. It is in our ethical response to God that we know God's working. If we think about this as Christians who are inspired by a Chalcedonian vision of God's incarnation in Jesus Christ—the vision of a God whose work is at the same time both fully divine and fully human—then we can expect God's ongoing work in the world to follow a similar Chalcedonian pattern. God is at work in the world, not orchestrating events mechanically at a distance; but God is at work doing God's work in a thoroughly human fashion. It is through *us* that God is working. This was evident in the many stories of sacrifice and self-giving that inspired our courage and commitment on September 11. If the dark side of religion helped to inspire the wrongdoing of that day, the light provided by religion was pointing to something beyond the wrongdoing.

We must weigh the question from still another angle. If the question, "Where is God?" is a pertinent one to ask on September 11, it was just as pertinent on September 10, and September 9, and September 8, and September 7. . . . For there was injustice, and hatred, and death on those days too—injustice, hatred, and death in which we in the West are implicated. People cried out to God on those days too. There is something skewed about a religious faith that can cry this cry on September 11 and then again on September 12 but that failed to cry the same cry on September 10. This we need to acknowledge, and seek forgiveness. And yet, whether we were able to cry the cry on September 10 or not, if we will but continue to cry it in the days ahead, then there is hope. We are being called to move beyond that

¹² See especially Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991).

adolescent form of religion that calls for divine help only when times are hard. Our calling is to a more demanding form of religion, what Levinas calls a religion for adults.¹³ We must learn to combine John Calvin's dictum that in all things we are doing business with God (*negotium cum Deo*) with the dictum of Dietrich Bonhoeffer that we must go about that business with the radical responsibility of those who act as if God were not a straightforward given (*etsi Deus non daretur*). That is, we stand in responsibility before God as a people who must deal with life, and deal with it as though God were not going to intervene. Or better still, we must deal with it as though God desired to "intervene"—if that is the right word—but only by acting *through* us. We must listen for the divine summons that emerges at every moment. It is not that we stand powerless awaiting the will of God, but God is prompting us to dare, by the Spirit's grace, to be the will of God.

This we must insist to be true, that God desires to work through us. At the same time, however, this is an exquisitely dangerous belief; for it is, formally speaking, exactly what the terrorist Mohammed Atta believed. In commandeering a jetliner into the heart of the World Trade Center, killing himself and thousands of others, Atta was convinced he was doing the will of Allah. One of the questions that this series, "For Such a Time as This" was charged with answering is how do we test religion, and even more, how do we test revelation—not only the revelation by which we live, but claims to revelation in other religious faiths. Some would say that revelation has no judge but revelation itself. There is no way, so that argument goes, to get outside of revelation or to communicate from within one revelation to the other. This, too, is a dangerous thing to believe. Again, it is just what Mohammed Atta believed. Listening to Osama bin Laden chirp the sweet cadences of religious devotion on the tape released December 13, praising Allah for these massacres, has rightly prompted those who are not of a religious mind to wonder whether religion is a good thing or a bad thing, especially when revelation is played as a deadly trump card.

In one sense it is true that revelation gives its own criteria of judgment, yet we must remember there is no guarantee that any of us has got those criteria straight. In these days we have seen both the promise and the promiscuity of religious faith—the promise, as people turn to God and to the Other in response to cataclysmic events; but also the promiscuity and perversion of religious faith as belief in a heaven of sensual delights is made the reward for

¹³ Emmanuel Levinas, "A Religion for Adults," in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 11–23.

an act that is nothing less than demonic. Religion claims to redeem, but in many cases it is religion itself that needs to be redeemed.

My answer to the question of how we test revelation is a straightforward one. The truth of revelation is tested in the living. That which enhances life is of the truth and that which destroys life cannot lead us into truth. The test to be used in discerning revelation is the extent to which what revelation prompts us to say and do enhances life, the extent to which it is the embodiment of grace. For the Christian this criterion is embodied in the life, the teachings, the death, the resurrection, and the coming again of Jesus Christ. He is the one who teaches that God is for human beings and with human beings and calls upon us to be for and with one another. It is still an open question whether the events of September 11 have elicited a return to true religion or whether they have provided us with but another example of missing religion's deeper meaning.

II. OUR RESPONSE

Now we are at war. On Sunday, October 7, 2001 the United States military began air strikes against selected targets in Afghanistan. There can be no question that events of man-made mass death such as occurred on September 11 demand a response. Such a response must be forceful, measured, but above all, it must be wise. It is always better to pursue a multilateral rather than unilateral response. One wishes the U.S. had used this opportunity to strengthen the United Nations and to promote solutions to conflict based in diplomacy. It is not clear that the precipitous course we took was the only way.

At the same time, there are occasions when diplomacy alone is not enough. Indeed, if the lessons of genocide and destruction since World War II mean anything, then the prevention and elimination of man-made mass death is not simply an option but a duty. Still, this elimination goes deeper than just capturing or containing terrorists. Robert J. Lifton spoke of the "genocidal mentality" as something evident not only in the near-destruction of European Jewry by the Nazis but in our own nuclear deterrence policies of "mutually assured destruction."¹⁴ Operating through an extreme reliance upon science or technology, the genocidal mentality is carried out by a special elite that often appeals to a certain religious fervor and even mysticism. Whether in the form of storm troopers under Hitler or today's suicide bombers, this elite must undergo special training and an heroic ordeal to

¹⁴ Robert J. Lifton and Erik Marcusen, *The Genocidal Mentality: Nazi Holocaust and Nuclear Threat* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

prove themselves ready to kill without consideration of the consequences. Whether in the rigorous training of those who may be scrambled to drop nuclear devices or in the would-be terrorist's symbolic act of lying all night in a coffin reciting the Koran, the actions of this elite are claimed to be driven by a "higher purpose." Such purpose can take the form of a supposed purification of the race, or the supposed prevention of casualties due to an invasion of Japan, or what have you. In all cases, Lifton thinks, this extremist mentality leads to the strange self-contradiction of "killing in order to heal."

If it is true that the genocidal mentality takes on a quasi-religious connotation, then perhaps it should come as no surprise that in recent years we have witnessed a new spate of theologically-sanctioned violence. Documenting the dangers of religious extremism in his book, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, sociologist Mark Juergensmeyer has examined violence not only in Islam (e.g., the first World Trade Center bombing and the Hamas suicide bombings in Israel) but also among Sikhs (e.g., assassination of Indira Gandhi), in Buddhism (e.g., Aum Shirikyo subway gas attacks in Tokyo), in Judaism (e.g., assassinations of Yitshak Rabin and Rabbi Meir Kahane), and in Christianity (protracted conflict in Northern Ireland and murder of physicians performing abortions in the U.S.A.).¹⁵ His thesis is that religious violence cannot be written off as an aberration; rather, the fundamental belief structures of religion have a way of becoming a breeding ground for violence. Within a religious context violence takes on the aura of a symbolic performance. It assumes its rightful place within an overarching ideology of cosmic conflict in which the religious adherent vaunts himself as the chief protagonist. The resort to violence as a strategy comports with extremist religion's unbending and absolutist goals. The zeal of this form of religion admits of no compromise. Dedicated adherents to the cause are likened to warriors, and it is no accident that such extremism flourishes within an ethos of closely-knit male bonding.¹⁶ Close companies of young men are spurred on to complete devotion, so complete that obedience unto death is the norm, and if this obedience actually leads one into death, the glories of martyrdom are said to await.

Although Juergensmeyer focuses on marginalized religious groups, similar sorts of passions would seem to be lurking in the resort to civil religion and

¹⁵ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

¹⁶ Cf. Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997).

religious ideologies by majority groups.¹⁷ This is by no means to paint all parties to the world's conflicts with the same undifferentiated and relativistic brush, but a little bit of self-examination regarding the religious fervor of our own mainstream religious ways of thinking is in order. The religious warrants drawn upon by Israelis for the suppression of Palestinians or the battle hymns being sung by Americans to support the current struggle with terrorism give one serious pause. In the rhetoric of religion that has permeated the American response to September 11, there is little mention of forgiveness or praying for one's enemies.

Given all these ambiguities, where does that leave us? I believe that, in principle, the use of force in response to September 11 is appropriate. The question is what form this response should take and under what parameters it should be shaped. One wishes other solutions had been explored. To be sure, if such a heinous act as this does not warrant the use of force to protect innocent life, then what would? Yet it is only with trepidation and a heavy heart that one can make such an affirmation, because of the inevitable loss of life that military action entails. As I write this, the U.S. prosecution of a campaign against al-Qaeda and their supporters, the Taliban, in Afghanistan has produced unintended civilian casualties, and this is lamentable. Ascertaining the number of such casualties from news reports is well nigh impossible, and this is disturbing. A much more serious concern—the millions of refugees at risk of starvation—existed to a certain extent apart from the war but clearly has been exacerbated by it. The delivery of effective humanitarian relief is an urgent priority.

Notwithstanding the apparent military successes of the current campaign in Afghanistan, great caution still must be exercised. This is so, lest the use of force against terrorists become a pretext for perpetuating what many see as American imperialistic designs. It is disconcerting that as I write these words the drumbeat is growing louder for military action against Iraq.¹⁸ To be sure, if the prevention of man-made mass death gives one good reason to go to war, then containing the ability of Iraq to develop weapons of mass destruction would seem to have some justification.¹⁹ Yet things are not that

¹⁷ See Richard K. Fenn, *Beyond Idols: The Shape of a Secular Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁸ Numerous examples could be cited, including remarks by high level officials in the Bush administration, but one triumphalistic declaration was especially alarming: Eliot A. Cohen, "Iraq Can't Resist Us," *The Wall Street Journal*, Tuesday, December 18, 2001, page A16. Here it was argued that going to war with Iraq would be another "cakewalk" for the U.S. but offered no analysis of why war with Iraq was warranted.

¹⁹ During the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein ordered the use of chemical weapons. He also used nerve gas on his own citizens, the minority Kurdish

simple. First, there are many nations with such weapons, including the United States. Second, there is no evidence at this time that Iraq had anything directly to do with September 11. Third, the current situation in the Middle East is extremely volatile, especially with the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians at a crisis point, thus raising serious prudential considerations about the wisdom of any precipitous military action in that region.

It has become commonplace to say that after September 11 "everything has changed." Nothing could be further from the truth. *Some* things have changed dramatically. Airport check-ins are longer. The life expectancy of the average al-Qaeda fighter in Afghanistan has been made much shorter. Above all, the collective bereavement we have suffered has left Americans chastened and with a new sense of the vulnerability of all we hold dear. Yet one of the strangest and most disconcerting things is how much has not changed. One wonders whether we have allowed the experience of September 11 to teach us anything, for how quickly we have resorted to the same ideologically-driven arguments that made sense to us before. Advocates on the far right see September 11 as another good reason for tax cuts for the wealthy. Advocates on the far left see the American military response to September 11 not as self-defense but as another example of oil-thirsty imperialism.

Perhaps it is only natural that in formulating a response to cataclysmic events we would resort to our deepest prejudices. Today, as always, Christians are divided in their response to September 11 between pacifists and just war theorists.²⁰ The church's dual witness to pacifism and just war theory reflects the dilemma of being creatures still in need of redemption, for there is no one who is good enough or wise enough to contain in one theological position all that the coming of God's reign requires. Pacifism reminds us of our ultimate responsibility to a world that is still to come, while just war theory reminds us of our ongoing penultimate responsibility to the world that is here and now. Commitment to our ultimate allegiance should receive a

population in Northern Iraq, causing close to 5,000 deaths, including women and children. During the so-called "Gulf War" he lobbed some 39 Scud missiles at populated centers in Israel. There is abundant evidence that he possesses not only chemical weapons but biological weapons and that he has made an effort to acquire a nuclear capability.

²⁰ It may be time to revisit a remarkable document from the 1940s, edited by Yale professor Robert C. Calhoun, in which both pacifists and just war theorists agreed upon a theological statement concerning World War II. Were it to be rewritten today, it would need to take account of a reality that did not exist when it was published, the advent of the nuclear age. "The Relation of the Church to the War in the Light Of the Christian Faith," *Social Action* 10/10 (December 15, 1944): 1-79.

strategic priority, even as the demands of our penultimate responsibility necessitate a tactical priority.

Christian theologians and church leaders need to stress that military force is never in itself a solution to anything. We need to insist, moreover, that revenge and retaliation are unworthy of a great nation. The resort to war is never a solution but a sign that we have failed at a solution. While in a sinful world the use of force may be necessary as part of our response to the violence of events, we cannot claim that such violence is the proper response to what God is saying in the events. War is at best a stop-gap in a disordered world. War is not properly speaking the will of God. To that extent, pacifists are correct. But, contrary to what some prominent pacifist theologians today are teaching, Christians do have a proper stake in supporting and protecting the democratic institutions of this world. The world is better with democratic institutions than without them, and their existence is fragile and requires the active support of the whole citizenry. As Augustine taught, the church is not an isolated community that flees the world but a community that bears witness to a hope in God that is larger than what any single human community can contain. What we have seen in and around New York City since September 11 is a great interfaith response to our common human despair over all that "went down" on that awful day—not only planes and buildings but an overwrought self-reliance that had no place for God. It is to God—and to what Augustine called the "City of God"—that we turn our hopes.

If our ultimate hope is in God, still we Christians have a penultimate responsibility and calling that cannot be ignored. Our theology of creation teaches us to be concerned for the worldly institutions that make human flourishing possible. Similarly, our theology of redemption teaches us that these worldly institutions do not dwell beyond the reach of grace. Augustine argued that the Christian's ultimate allegiance is to the peace that passes all understanding of the City of God; but, at the same time, the peace of the earthly city remains a vital concern. Augustine is crystal clear that the City of God reaches beyond the confines of the church.²¹ By grace, all who are truly dedicated to truth and virtue are made citizens of the heavenly city. For now, living in the mean time of history, we must contend with a situation in which the two cities are inextricably mixed, like wheat and tares.²² For now, one must cooperate with the earthly city, pay one's taxes, reap the fruits of an

²¹ Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), Book xix.

²² See R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

economy that is often unjust, and thus negotiate countless situations in which one's own hands are not clean.

In short, our situation is ambiguous. Hence, for Augustine there is no such thing as a "just" war; rather, a particular use of force can only be seen as more or less just as the circumstances merit. The only legitimate use of force is to stop evil, to protect innocent life, and to right wrongs. War, no less than police action, may be necessary to curb evildoing, but the purpose of such war can never be to satisfy the base motives of one's own aggrandizement or of simply evening the score. Least of all is the purpose of war to keep the price of oil at an optimal level.

In this regard it is instructive to weigh the present crisis against the lessons of the 1991 "Gulf War" and the 1995 intervention in Kosovo. One important set of essays tacitly admits that the Gulf War was a "success" but asks, Was it just?²³ I believe the real question is just the reverse. Repelling the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait may well have met the technical requirements of just war theory (as Michael Walzer and others argued at the time), both as to whether the cause was just (*jus ad bellum*) and as to the conduct of the war itself (*jus in bello*).²⁴ The real question, though, is whether the Gulf War accomplished anything.²⁵ I am not sure it did, and it may have made matters in the region worse. Contrast that with U.S. reticence to confront the emergency in the Balkans. Whereas the United States rushed to war in the Gulf, we refrained

²³ David E. DeCosse, ed., *But Was It Just?: Reflections on the Morality of the Persian Gulf War* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

²⁴ Michael Walzer, "Justice and Injustice in the Gulf War," in *But Was It Just?*, 1-17. Running the gauntlet of *jus ad bellum* requires a just cause, declared by a proper authority, pursued for the right purposes, with a reasonable chance of success and with the response being proportional to the circumstances. The *jus in bello* concerns require discrimination in selection of targets, especially the avoidance of civilian targets, and the proportionate use of force. See generally Paul Ramsey, *The Just War: Force and Political Responsibility* (New York: Scribner's, 1968); and, Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars. A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

²⁵ The Gulf War certainly did not turn Kuwait into a democracy. Nor did it eliminate instability in the region, though it may have reduced some of the capacity of Iraq to wage war. The great irony is that the offense that provoked the war—Iraq's invasion of Kuwait—possibly could have been avoided altogether through more competent diplomacy. Although the Iraqi army had been gathering near the border of Kuwait in the summer of 1990, the U.S. did nothing diplomatically in advance to warn Iraq against invasion but quite the reverse: just eight days before the invasion, on orders from the State Department, our ambassador, April Glaspie, communicated to the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, a sense of U.S. nonchalance about intra-Arab disputes. In fact, when the news was reported to Secretary of State James Baker, his response was noncommittal. The same is true of President George Bush's immediate response. Only when Margaret Thatcher declared that the invasion had to be reversed did U.S. policy become clear, and Bush announced that the invasion would not stand. Also ironic is the fact that the continued U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia since the conclusion of the war has been the primary grievance that has led militant Islamicists, such as Osama bin Laden, to turn their terror loose on U.S. interests.

for years from intervening decisively with military action to stop Serbs from acts of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. Not only did we hesitate for too long but the United States and Europe refused to lift an arms embargo that was preventing Bosnian Muslims from defending themselves. After three years of bloody conflict, a diplomatic agreement was reached; but not before thousands had been slaughtered in an ongoing campaign of genocide. When a similar imbroglio erupted between Serbia and Kosovo, the United States, in cooperation with NATO, finally acted militarily to prevent the Serbs from pursuing a campaign of "ethnic cleansing" against ethnic Albanians. This campaign was pursued against loud protests throughout Europe, yet the prevention of man-made mass death was the right thing to do.

Clearly, our ability to think through the rights and wrongs of war has been overwhelmed by modern warfare's ability to turn all our discussion into ghostly silence. What are we to make of the fact that our own country not only ushered us into the nuclear age, but that it has steadfastly refused to renounce such weaponry? We have even refused to renounce the first use of such weaponry. At the time I delivered this address, high government officials were even debating the possibility of using small tactical nuclear weapons in Afghanistan as part of the response to September 11. It is no wonder that Karl Barth in 1958 declared that the machinery of war and the very existence of weapons of mass destruction constitute a "*status confessionis*," i.e. a situation in which the gospel itself is at stake. The church must oppose both the existence and the use of such weapons in the name of the God who created both heaven and earth and who desires their redemption from evil. This was the view not only of Barth, but it has also been advanced on more than one occasion by the American Roman Catholic bishops.²⁶ Perhaps, with the events of September 11, the churches are now being called to revisit this issue and speak with a renewed sense of confessional urgency.

If we can say it reverently, there may be a sense in which the events of September 11, 2001 were revelatory. By this I do not mean that God made these events happen in order to somehow teach us something. Such a Falwellian view is reprehensible. No, these were not events that God was orchestrating for our chastisement. These are events that grieve the heart of God, events as to which God is saying "no." There is no inherent "meaning"

²⁶ See "The Morality of Nuclear Deterrence: An Evaluation issued on the 15th anniversary of *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*," by Pax Christi Bishops in the United States, June 1998. See also U. S. Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1983); and *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace: A Reflection of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on the Tenth Anniversary of "The Challenge of Peace,"* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1994).

to be found in the events of September 11, for these were events that were the denial of all meaning; and yet they were events that could not succeed in snuffing meaning out. If there is any meaning to be found in these events, it will only be found in the righteousness of our response. Doubtless such a response must include doing everything reasonable to assure that events like these can ever occur again. Yet it must also include a proper self-assessment and critique, without which no adequate meaning is ever to be had. In our resolve to stop terror we must remain ever-mindful of how all actions in history contain possibilities both for good and for ill. All actions contain consequences that we can neither see nor control. Hence, the human community now waits breathlessly in hope that somehow, by the grace of God, a new cycle of violence and counter-violence can be avoided.

September 11 and the Theology of the Cross

by DANIEL L. MIGLIORE

Daniel L. Migliore, Charles Hodge Professor of systematic Theology, is author of numerous books and articles, among them Rachel's Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope (co-author) and Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology. He delivered these remarks on November 15, 2001 in Stuart Hall as part of the series, "For Such a Time as This."

AMONG THE MANY poignant reminders of the events of September 11 is the photo of a cross on the spire of a Greek Orthodox Church silhouetted against the Twin Towers. The church once stood adjacent to the New York Trade Center before the Towers and nearby buildings, including the church, collapsed in an attack that killed thousands of people. That arresting photo provides a visual image of what I want to say this evening by way of a theological response to the events of September 11 and their aftermath. If I am asked about God in relation to these events, my initial desire is to keep silent for a long while. When it is time to speak, I want my remarks to begin, continue, and end with reference to the cross of Jesus Christ.

Having the passion of Christ as our reference point for our response to September 11 and the military actions that have followed will be expressed first of all in practical ways: in prayerful remembrance of those killed on that day and in the ensuing war; in intercession for all who were injured, left homeless, or unemployed; in pastoral care for the countless other survivors of these violent acts who have been perhaps less obviously but nonetheless deeply wounded in spirit, who are confused and fearful and are now struggling to regain hope and confidence; in sustained programs of food, clothing, and medical assistance to hundreds of thousands of refugees in Afghanistan; in resolute resistance to the forces of suspicion, prejudice, deprivation of civil rights, and brutality that are stirred by war; and in vigorous efforts on behalf of peace, justice, and reconciliation at the local, national, and international levels. These are urgent and practical forms of Christian response to what has happened. Our attempts to wrestle with the meaning of these events theologically, important as this effort may be, should not be separated from the practical responses I have mentioned.

The title of my remarks suggests that a "theology of the cross" should guide our attempt to come to terms theologically with the events of September 11. What do I mean by a theology of the cross? In the letters of the apostle Paul and in the writings of theologians like Luther, Calvin, and Barth, a theology of the cross has to do with the hiddenness of God in revelation,

with God's not being accessible in those places and forms we are accustomed to look for God, and conversely, a theology of the cross bears witness to God's strange presence in events that overwhelm us with a sense of God's apparent absence. For Christian faith the cross of Jesus Christ is the supreme event that reveals yet also hides God's presence and activity in the world, the event in which the love of God is decisively revealed in deep darkness and the salvation of the world is unexpectedly accomplished once for all. In the power of the cross of Christ and in the light of the resurrection, we trust in God's redemptive love to be victorious over evil even when evil seems completely triumphant.

In Luther's Heidelberg Disputation of 1518, where he first outlined what he meant by a "theology of the cross," he states in thesis twenty-one that unlike a theology of glory which "calls evil good and good evil," a theology of the cross "calls the thing what it actually is." I suggest that in the wake of September 11, the church and theology need to muster the courage to do a lot of calling things what they actually are.

That process might well begin with learning anew in the shadow of September 11 *to think and speak of God as God really is* and not as we imagine God to be. The God of the gospel is not the invulnerable and impassible God of our religious imagination, nor the God who guarantees immunity from the ravages of sin and evil. If a theology of the cross is our interpretive key of the events of September 11, we will bear witness to God's redemptive presence among the victims of violence and among those brave enough to minister to the wounded and the dying at great cost to themselves. In the light of the crucified God who freely and for the sake of our salvation entered into the depths of human brokenness and misery, we are bold to confess God's solidarity with all victims of hatred and brutality and to discern the presence of the Spirit of God in those who risk themselves to help the needy. Apart from the astonishing love of God in Jesus Christ in whom the world's deadly hostilities and its logic of hatred, torture, and revenge have been taken into God's own heart to be absorbed and extinguished there, we are utterly lost and undone. To speak of Jesus and his cross, of the presence and activity of God in the one who "emptied" himself for our sake (Phil 2:5ff.), is to speak of God not as the invulnerable potentate but as God really is.

As an interpretive key of September 11 together with its pre-history and post-history, a theology of the cross will also *expose human beings for the violent and dangerous sinners we are*. We are much closer to Cain than to Adam than we are ready to admit. Seen in the light of the cross, September 11 compels us to acknowledge the violence and brutality we human beings are capable of and what God is up against in dealing with us. We call the perpetrators of this

heinous act not martyrs but mass murderers because that is speaking the truth and calling things what they actually are. At the same time, it will not serve the cause of truth and reconciliation simply to demonize the perpetrators and pretend that violence is something that only "others" do. We are all ensnared in webs of violence, and are capable of inflicting great harm on our friends, on our enemies, on ourselves, and on God. Acknowledging that we too are practitioners of violence would, in the light of the cross of Christ, be an act of calling things what they are. If our versions of American Christianity featuring humanity without sin, a gospel without repentance, and a Christ without a cross did not crumble to dust with the wars of the twentieth century and the event of the Shoah, they collapsed with the Twin Towers on September 11.

Again, as an interpretive key of September 11, a theology of the cross will compel us as never before *to call religion what it actually is*. Religion is, bluntly put, not only an extraordinarily ambiguous but also a potentially lethal practice. On the one hand, religion is capable of expressing humanity's highest values, aspirations, and sensibilities. It has sometimes been called the soul of human culture, the expression of much that is good, gentle, and just in human life. On the other hand, religion is a seething cauldron in which limitless hate and mass murder can be brewed. The crusader proclaims "Jesus is Lord" as he cleaves the skull of an infidel; the pious terrorist in the name of Allah pilots an airliner loaded with fuel and packed with passengers into an office building where thousands of defenseless people are beginning their morning tasks. This is the dark side of religion, and we had better not ignore it lest, as Luther said, we "call evil good and good evil." A theology of the cross will serve to remind us after September 11 that if our own faith and theology are not always being critically examined, and where necessary reformed, if the doctrines we teach—from the authority of Scripture to the visions of the Last Things—are not tested by the proclamation of God crucified, they risk becoming the tool of destructive and dehumanizing forces.

If a theology of the cross is our interpretive key of September 11, it will no doubt also compel Christians in America to become far more self-critical of ourselves and of our nation's priorities than we have ever been before. We must *tell the history of our relationships with other nations without pretense and cover up*, taking seriously the way other people experience and perceive these relationships. We must be willing to ask hard questions of ourselves, our society, our economic priorities, our foreign policies, and most especially our attitudes toward and relationships with Muslim peoples. I do not for a moment think that the perpetrators of September 11 can be justified or

excused by knowing what factors may have led to their being so filled with hatred. What they did was an abomination. Yet we must seek to understand the conditions out of which their actions arose rather than dismiss what happened as simply the work of madmen. We must ask hard and disquieting questions: questions about the fairness of our attitudes and policies toward Palestinians and their aspirations for statehood; questions about the huge and ever increasing dependence of our economy on Near Eastern oil and the way this dependence has both driven foreign policy and undercut serious efforts to develop renewable fuel sources; questions about our self-interested support of governments in the Muslim world that are, as is widely recognized, corrupt dictatorships favoring the rich and failing to represent the hopes and needs of the masses of their people.

As an interpretive key of September 11, a theology of the cross will not end with a critique of economy and politics. It will include—indeed will focus—on *the need for self-criticism of the church and theology* and especially of their relationship to American civil religion. Here again we need to call things what they really are. Have we been sufficiently self-critical of those interpretations of Christian faith that use it for nationalistic, racial, or class purposes? Has “God bless America” become the new liturgy of many American Christians, and is confusion between Christian faith and uncritical allegiance to the state on the rise in our country? A recent e-mail from a pastor told of some members of his congregation wanting to place an American flag in the sanctuary as the most appropriate response to the attack in New York and Washington.

A theology of the cross will remind the church of its central message and mission of reconciliation, particularly in time of war. That too would be an exercise in giving things their right names. The Confession of 1967 of the PC (USA), adopted when our nation was in the midst of another war, makes a stunning and remarkably timely statement:

“The church, in its own life, is called to practice the forgiveness of enemies and to commend to the nations as practical politics the search for cooperation and peace. This search requires that the nations pursue fresh and responsible relations across every line of conflict, even at risk to national security, to reduce areas of strife and to broaden international understanding. Reconciliation among nations becomes peculiarly urgent as countries develop nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, diverting their [labor] and resources from constructive uses and risking the annihilation of humankind. Although nations may serve God’s purposes in history, the church which identifies the sovereignty of

any one nation or any one way of life with the cause of God denies the lordship of Christ and betrays its calling."¹

Is the church today up to the challenge of calling the message and mission of the church of Jesus Christ what they really are?

Finally, September 11 in the light of a theology of the cross will insist that we *call the history of the relationship of Christians and Muslims what it really is*: a story of mutual and monumental ignorance, at best a story of indifference, and all too often, a story of open reciprocal hostility. We are now having thrust on us a long overdue and vitally necessary encounter and dialogue between Christians and Muslims. Our ignorance of and indifference to this mission—in church, seminary, and theology—has been terribly costly and calls for our repentance. Christians need to repent of the triumphalism that finds expression not only in economic and political policies but that is also present in the reluctance to recognize any truth and virtue in other communities of faith. In the new encounter between Christianity and Islam, Christians will be called to listen and learn as well as wanting to speak and teach, to confess the times Christians have acted as agents of terror as well as hoping to be assured that true Islam unconditionally repudiates all forms of terrorism.

I have no illusions that this encounter will be an easy one. I have recently been reading a volume by Jarif Khalidi, entitled *The Muslim Jesus*. According to Khalidi, the Qur'an and the Islamic tradition generally have a high regard for Jesus. In describing the picture of Jesus present in the Qur'an, Khalidi notes that the emphasis falls on several things: stories of the birth and infancy of Jesus, stories of his miracles and ascension, stories of his conversations with God, and divine pronouncements on his humanity and his proper place in the prophetic line. There is, however, no Sermon on the Mount, no parables of Jesus, and most conspicuous of all, no passion story. Christian theologians in conversation with Muslim theologians will want to learn what resources there are in Islam for cultivating habits of mutual respect for people who are very different, for engendering a spirit of cooperation and peace with all people, and for extending the forgiveness and compassion of God to the entire human family. In turn, we Christians will no doubt be asked what the heart of the Christian message is, and I hope the message of the cross will not be marginalized in our response. But Muslims will also want to know whether what we Christians say is the heart of our faith in fact defines and guides our concrete practices. Willingness to accept the vulnerability of that kind of conversation will be one important expression of a theology of the cross in response to the events of September 11.

¹ *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Part I, Book of Confessions* (New York: Offices of the General Assembly, 1999), 259–60.

Christian Faith and American Patriotism

by NANCY J. DUFF

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SOME YEARS AGO Paul Lehmann began his book, *Ethics in a Christian Context*, by observing that the word "ethics" originated from "to ethos," a Greek word that meant "stable" or "stall."¹ Ethics, Lehmann suggested, points to the stability in human affairs in a way similar to the stability that a stall provides for domestic animals. For Christians it is impossible to ignore the coincidence between the origin of the word "ethics" and the origins of Jesus' life in a stable.

This One who will be great, the Son of the Most High, the savior of the world is a baby born in a place intended for sheltering animals.² And because we know the whole story, we know that it is not a story of one of lowly birth who rises through the ranks to success and greatness. This messiah was born in an animal stall and executed on a cross. The reversal of power demonstrated through the manger and the cross is anticipated by Mary's words in the Magnificat.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts
He has brought down rulers from their thrones
But has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
But has sent the rich away empty. (Luke 1:51-53)

Birth in an animal stall and death on a cross provide the threshold for God's radical invasion into the world (certainly not the portal one would expect for "the Son of the Most High"). At this unlikely threshold we see Mary at the manger and will later see her at the cross. The same cannot be said of any other biblical figure, but it can be said of us, for as readers and hearers of the Word, we, too, are there at the manger and at the cross. We, too, are called

¹ Paul L. Lehmann, *Ethics in a Christian Context* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963),

^{23-4.}
² This paragraph is taken from my essay titled, "Mary, the Servant of the Lord: Christian Vocation at the Manger and the Cross," which I wrote for *Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary*, ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Cynthia L. Rigby, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, forthcoming).

to give witness to the One who has scattered the proud, brought down rulers, and lifted up the humble.³

Shirley Guthrie reminds us that the birth narratives tell us that the incarnation happened at a particular time (in the days of Herod the king), in a particular place (in Bethlehem), and in connection with a particular mother (Mary). The birth narrative locates the incarnation geographically (Jesus was born in Palestine), politically (in the context of a census) and economically (a poor child, born to a poor mother). "In short," Guthrie concludes, "we are not just talking about religious ideas and doctrines; we are talking about history."⁴

It is appropriate, then, to ask ourselves how we speak of the presence of God in *our* particular time and place, in the days after September 11, during the presidency of George W. Bush, at a time when refugees are fleeing the bombing of Afghanistan, and Americans are increasingly nervous about boarding a plane or opening their daily mail. The ethos in which we find ourselves is one of war.

This ethos of war was well represented by one foreign affairs columnist for the *New York Times* who challenged the impatience of those who would like the bombing in Afghanistan to cease by saying, "My motto is 'Give war a chance.'" This same journalist, encouraging the United States not to hold back on military action, claimed that the war in Afghanistan is a hockey game, insisting that we cannot play hockey using the rules for women's basketball. One could just as easily insist that we cannot sing the Magnificat with Mary, when we should be marching to "Stars and Stripes Forever." If the ethos of war has taken over, and war itself takes on the ethos of a hockey game, how can we as loyal Americans refuse to serve as its cheerleaders?

But as Christians who *have* heard the Magnificat, who *have stood at the manger and looked upon the Cross*, how can we endorse the bombs bursting in air over Afghanistan, bombs that produce terror and destruction just as devastating for those who are its victims as the terror and destruction produced by the planes-turned-into-bombs in the United States on September 11?

While it would be appropriate to answer that question by assuming a position of Christian pacifism, and even though I believe that those Christians who do boldly hold to pacifism stand closer to the angels than those of

³ This reversal of power is portrayed in a nativity set from Bangladesh. Made by an artist who lives in a country that knows hunger the figures of Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and even the animals, the wise men, and, of course, the Christ child are noticeably thin.

⁴ Shirley C. Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 234-5.

us who do not, I must admit that pacifism is a position I do not take. It is, therefore, not for reasons of pacifism, but, nevertheless, for both political and theological reasons that I strongly disagree with the bombing of Afghanistan. The remainder of my comments, however, will not address why I am not a pacifist or why I object to the war in which we are now engaged, but the question of what American patriotism looks like for those who are called to give witness to the manger and the cross, especially in a time of war.

One cannot, of course, *naïvely* invoke the image of the manger and the cross to address the horrors of war, but neither can Christians baptize the world's use of power as though it were an expression of the power of God. Nor can we believe that "the power of baptism" which is ours in Jesus the Christ has nothing to say to the powers and principalities that seek to rule—and sometimes to destroy—this world. The image of the manger and the Cross is, in fact, not a naïve image. The Reformed doctrine of vocation directs us from worship at the manger and the cross into the world and back again. For the majority of us in this room that means going into the world as Christians who are also Americans. That we are Americans is not an insignificant piece of our identity, but neither is it the first or most significant aspect of who we are.

In seeking to find an appropriate Christian approach to patriotism we need to admit that there is always a crass element of expression in any cultural or political movement that does not represent the whole. Bumper stickers that proclaim "Nuke 'em now" and T-shirts displaying the image of Osama bin Laden surrounded by the words, "Wanted Dead or Alive" do not represent vast numbers of thoughtful people, including Christians, who fly American flags in honor of those who died at the hands of terrorists in New York City, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania. An increased appreciation for what we have, an enormous sense of grief over what we have lost, and acute anxiety over what could happen next add to the need to fly flags and invoke God's blessings on this nation. I do not disagree with Christians for engaging in those actions even though I myself have not done the same.

It is, however, important to note that it was not some entrepreneurial T-shirt maker, but the President of the United States who invoked the crass image of a "Wanted" poster from the Old West's version of law and order by claiming that he wants Osama bin Laden "dead or alive." It was the President of the United States who made the promise "to rid the world of evil" as if by the exertion of human power sin can be overcome. It was the President of the United States who initially dubbed the military campaign of bombing in Afghanistan, "Operation Infinite Justice," as if a political entity rather than God alone can ensure anything into infinity.

If we live within the ethos created by the manger and the cross, how can Christians express loyalty to their country without compromising their belief that Jesus Christ alone is Lord?

(1) If as Christians we fly our country's flag, we can do so only with the understanding that this symbol, like symbols for all other aspects of our life, stands at the foot of the cross, not alongside it. I do not like to see flags in church, but if they are present it must be clear to the worshipping community that they are there under, not alongside of, the Lordship of Jesus Christ. There are chilling pictures of the Nazi flag standing with the Christian flag, each on either side of the altar in a sanctuary in Germany. That is, of course, a far cry from our allowing flags in our sanctuary, but the danger of confusing loyalty to God and loyalty to the nation is just as real. I know of one church that not only displayed a flag in the sanctuary, but also had worshippers recite the pledge of allegiance along with the call to worship.

(2) As Christians who profess that Christ alone is Lord we cannot afford to be uncritical of our nation's political and military actions even in time of war, especially in time of war. Supporting American troops cannot include accepting without protest whatever they are required to do. Our proclamation of the Lordship of Christ is all the more urgent when the powers and principalities of this world are at war. Very few statements against the war are made in the major news media, and if they are allowed, they are sandwiched in between disclaimers or strong criticism. For Christians, criticism must be part of our expression of love for our country.

(3) Loyalty to our country must never prevent us from facing the truth. There is no room for self-deception. In light of the events of September 11, we also need to face up to the fact that there was an earlier war in Afghanistan to which we contributed; there is an ongoing interest in the strategic location of Afghanistan for the oil industry (an industry from which our President and Vice President have received enormous benefits); civil rights are being suspended and violated under the guise of national security. We must face these truths not in order to generate cynicism, but to challenge this country, which we love, to live up to what we believe it is meant to be.

(4) The deepest appreciation and love for our country cannot be born of arrogance. God does not show special favors to one country over the next. And if we have more than some other countries that does not mean that we have greater freedom to brag, but a greater privilege to share our treasures with others. We do not have license to bury our treasure in the field, nor to destroy the field which holds the treasure by the frenzied consumption of more than what is ours, nor to invest our treasure only for our own benefits.

(5) The church is not defined along lines of nationalism. We can be very proud of where we live and what we have, but we cannot assume that we are the best of the best. My favorite hymn that is appropriately sung in the context of patriotism is "This is My Song" (sung to the haunting tune, Finlandia).

This is my song, O God of all the nations,
A song of peace for lands afar and mine.
This is my home, the country where my heart is;
Here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine;
But other hearts in other lands are beating
With hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.
My country's skies are bluer than the ocean,
And sunlight beams on clover-leaf and pine;
But other lands have sun light too, and clover,
And skies are everywhere as blue as mine.
O hear my song, thou God of all the nations,
A song of peace for their land and for mine.

(6) As Christians who sing the Magnificat because we have witnessed the manger and the cross, we must challenge the connection between patriotism and violence. The old saying seems to ring true: "Patriotism is the egg from which wars are hatched." And just as true is the reverse: War provides the nourishment for the spirit of patriotism to thrive. Christians must insist that love of country should not require the threat of war or scorn for foreign neighbors. For Christians, patriotism must be true to what we value as Christians who are also Americans. Patriotism for us should grow from the desire to enhance the lives of our compatriots as well as our neighbors rather than from our eagerness to destroy enemies. Christians, who seek to give witness to the manger and the cross, should seek to create an ethos in our country where pride soars not over the identification and destruction of enemies, but over the ability to lift up the humble, fill the hungry with good things, share our treasures, and make the stranger feel at home.

Words of Welcome

by THOMAS W. GILLESPIE

President Thomas W. Gillespie of Princeton Theological Seminary delivered these opening remarks at the Memorial Service for Dr. James Edwin Loder, Jr. in Miller Chapel on November 14, 2001.

ON BEHALF OF the Loder family, Arlene, Kim, Tami, two sons-in-law and three grandchildren, I welcome you to this service of witness to the resurrection in memory of and gratitude for the life of James Edwin Loder, Jr. I welcome you also on behalf of the Seminary community, the faculty, students, trustees, the administrators and staff as well as many, many, many alumni and alumnae who this day also mourn the loss of a beloved colleague, professor, and friend. I also welcome you on behalf of Jim Loder himself.

Jim put a lot of stock in intuition, as you know, and my intuition tells me that he is probably referring us to page eighty-two of his book *The Transforming Moment*. There in chapter three he seeks to confront his reader with the reality of what he called “the void”—the emptiness, the nothingness, the absence that threatens all human life—and there he hypothetically imagines his own death. Late one night by accident, while walking by lake Carnegie, he stumbles, hits his head against a limb, and drowns. No one ever learns what happens to him, and of this imagined scenario he writes, “My family lives three more months in the Seminary housing, there are a few tears, the Seminary holds a brief service, and a memorial minute is spread on the faculty record. Classes are rescheduled and the institution returns to normal.”

Nowhere in all history has there been a greater understatement, but Jim was right about one thing, for in a passage in the next chapter he goes on to affirm that the void is trumped by the holy. Rather than a nothing, there is someone. Instead of absence, there is presence, the presence of the one who said to Martha and to us, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25). My friends, my colleagues, in that hope let us worship God. Let us together hail the power of Jesus’ name.

A Work of Love in the Presence of an Absence

by WILLIAM GASKILL

Rev. William Gaskill, '78 M.Div., is a longtime friend of Dr. Loder. He is Pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Merchantville, New Jersey where he lives with his wife Jean.

THOSE OF US WHO have been Dr. Loder's students, readers, and friends have, as Dr. Gillespie intuitively pirated from my text, experienced this moment numerous times as we have lived through that phantom fatality in Lake Carnegie late one night. Dr. Loder used that scenario to cause us to get the flavor of what he called "the presence of an absence." Today, I feel very strongly the presence of an absence, but also the presence of a presence. He taught me and many others to recognize that the void comes with various faces. Sometimes they leer and sometimes they grin and sometimes they smile seductively, but they come with intrusive force. And most of the time our response is, "Run feet run." But he taught us that we need not flee, because the void is but prelude to the appearance of the holy.

The best pastoral advice I ever got came when I was leaving my home church and the associate pastor, who was a graduate of this institution, said, "Take every course with Dr. Loder that they will allow you to take." So I crammed them in and even weaseled my schedule around so that I could do a senior concentration with him. I have never regretted it. After graduation, I had Jim and Arlene in the two churches I served as often as I could manage it. And of course, he would tell *the story*. I never tired of hearing the story. You know the story that I refer to, of the infamous transforming moment by the side of the New York State throughway, of the man falling asleep inauspiciously, or auspiciously as the case may be, and of his crushed chest, and his wife in the name of Jesus lifting that old car off of his crushed chest, and him bouncing Tami on his crushed chest, and of the gray medical personnel who looked at him and said, "Surely this is a dead man." Of his arrival at that Catholic hospital where he looked out of the ambulance and saw the crucifix and the Savior hanging there and of knowing that he was being inhabited with a life so strong that death had no dominion over it. How he led those surgeons to sing hymns, who thought for sure this was a dead man. How God miraculously spared him. I have heard this story over and over and every time we were together I said inside my heart (not out loud) "tell it one more time." I have never tired of hearing the story. And now I feel like maybe I am just going to have to keep telling it until people will not put up with it any more. In that transforming experience he touched the hem of

a garment that changed his life. And through his changed life, many of our lives were changed.

Dr. Loder was a great man. That would sound better if a great man had said it, but I am the one speaking so I am who is left. Dr. Loder is a great man. He was and is great because of the incredible love for Jesus that beat within his breast and really is the defining core of his entire being. Dr. Loder is a great man because of his adoration and respect for his beloved Arlene. Dr. Loder is a great man because of his love for his family, and we who sat under his teaching heard how his little children taught him. He would come to the classroom and teach us what he had learned. Dr. Loder was a great man as he loved not only the Seminary, but the church. Dr. Loder was a great man because of all the broken people whom he counseled and for whom he somehow was able to act as a catalyst and an agent into the healing presence of the risen Christ. Dr. Loder was for me a great man because, though I always felt very humbled to be in his presence, every time I was with him, within two minutes' time my whole being felt electrified. And I never felt inferior, though his intellect certainly is prodigiously far beyond anything that I would ever hope to possess. He was always a humble man who treated me as though I was the most important person on earth; I felt that I rode his coattails into a holy place every time we were together.

He was great for all those reasons, but that is not where his true greatness was centered. His true greatness, really, pointed away from himself. His true greatness was in the fact that he was a captive, he was a bondsman of the love of Jesus Christ, and so his passion burned within him. He modeled the passion that I envy and hunger for in my own life and in the life of the people to whom I am pastor. You know, if you have been around, that every time Jim read scripture, he would weep. When that first snuck up on him he would apologize, and then after a while he learned to say, "This is what happens, and if you are offended *that is your problem.*" But I want to say today that Jim's tears were no problem for me. They were a great gift and a blessing and I will miss those tears. Greatly.

At my house I have an anthology of Pascal's work entitled *Mind on Fire*. Jim Loder was a man with a mind on fire, but more than that, he was a man with a heart on fire. I spent a prayer retreat one time down at the Jersey shore and I took my big bag of "to do" things, which I always do. It is like I am giving the Holy Spirit numerous options for how I will spend this time. And this one particular time, one of the options in the bag was *The Logic of the Spirit*. I spent an entire week reading that book, pouring over it and laboring to understand what he was saying and persevering until I began to get it, to have what Jim would call "Aha." And I was led following that week to write him

and thank him so much. To thank him that he cared enough to do the mental discipline that the life of the mind requires and to bring to that discipline a heart that is aflame for the love for Jesus.

Jim Loder was then and is now far beyond what we could ever ask or imagine, a transformed man. He was transformed among us and now he is transformed in that place where we will go one day. Paul said, "Lo, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable . . . what is perishable must put on imperishability and what is mortal must put on immortality . . . and then shall come to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. Oh death where is your victory? Oh death where is your sting?' . . . Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:51-57). And so—I do not know if he can hear me or not—but so, dear friend, mentor, and father in Christ, until we meet again, when this presence of an absence shall yield to eternal life together in all of its fullness: So long. . .and God bless.

Remembering Dr. James Loder: Reflections on the Moments We Shared

by KIM ENGELMANN

Rev. Kim Englemann, '84 M.Div., is the oldest daughter of Dr. James Loder. She is Associate Professor for Congregational Care at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in Menlo Park, California where she lives with her husband Tim and their three children Christopher, Julie, and Jonathan. She has written three books in the tradition of C.S. Lewis's Narnia series called The Joona Trilogy. She holds a D.Min. in Pastoral Care with Children from the Boston University School of Theology.

MY NAME IS KIM ENGELMANN, oldest daughter of James Loder. I am a pastor at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in Menlo Park California. My dad would come out to visit me, but try as he might he just did not like California very much. He told me it was too sunny there, and therefore it did not adequately reflect the existential struggle of human life. He preferred the rains of New Jersey because the more cloudy ambience, he said tongue-in-cheek, was one that would remind people of the "void."

There are many things I will miss about my father. I will miss our long talks in his study where the lamp often burned deep into the night, and where the ceiling to floor bookshelves crammed with volumes stood by listening to

us chat, like silent sentries around us, keeping us safe by their collective wisdom. In that study, stacks of papers layered at odd angles rose like towers on his desk and on the floor. I will miss him pulling out certain papers from other papers without having the stack collapse on top of itself, and the deftness he had in knowing where everything was in spite of it all. I will miss him eyeing his large collection of columns from physics to theology, from Godel, Escher, and Bach to *The Imitation of Christ*, with friendly affection. He knew them all well. And I will miss his enthusiasm as with his hazel glasses balanced on his nose he found in them the exact paragraph, the exact study, or the comment that somehow seemed relevant to whatever we were discussing.

I will miss his night runs to WAWA for ice cream and fudge topping. I will miss the way he watched Nebraska football with a bowl of popcorn balanced on his ample midsection. I will miss his sketches on placemats at restaurants which many times turned out to be excellent lifelike portraits of one of us, while we waited for food. His skill at drawing peaked one evening when, after reading to us C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* he drew a compelling portrait of Aslan, the Great Lion. That sketch of the lion with vibrant, compassionate eyes hangs in my office today, and everyone who stops in remarks, "Oh, that must be Aslan." I have not had to explain to anyone who the lion is yet, because the eyes belie his identity.

I will miss the cadence of my father's laughter, his buoyant humor, his plays on words—he loved puns. I will miss watching old Columbo movies together, eating peanut M&M's in the car (favorites for both of us), and the way he played hide-and-seek with my three children who loved Pop Pops dearly. What he would do is this: he would have them all hide, and then he would go lie down. And I will miss the way he bundled himself up with muffler and hat on relatively mild days, for he hated being cold and unfortunately he had two daughters who spent their childhood at Baker Rink figure skating. He would always come to watch us for *limited* periods of time, sitting stiffly on the bleachers, his shoulders up around his ears, his eyes watering while nodding frozen affirmations to our jumps and spins.

But the thing I will miss most about my father is his excitement about God. Nothing thrilled him more than to see the Holy Spirit at work in the church transforming human lives. Nothing mattered more to him than to be in touch himself with that life-giving *Spiritus Creator* on whom he himself was totally dependent. My father loved the verse in the song, "The Lord of the Dance" where it says, "They cut me down, but I leapt up high: I am the life that will never, never, die; I'll live in you if you live in me, for I am the Lord of the Dance said he." Perhaps he loved this because in the near-fatal car crash that he writes



DR. JAMES LODER IN THE CLASSROOM *CIRCA* 1980 (ABOVE),
AND *CIRCA* 1996 (BELOW).



DR. JAMES LODER EARLY IN HIS TEACHING CAREER *CIRCA* 1962 (ABOVE);
ON HIS BACK PORCH AT 74 MERCER ST. *CIRCA* 1997 (BELOW).

about in *The Transforming Moment* that we have mentioned here already, when God's presence entered him on that operating table he knew first hand the life that never, never dies. "I knew then," he always said, "I knew then I was going to live. I was either going to live here or there, but I knew I was going to live."

At that time, for the benefit of us all, for young daughters not yet grown, for books still to write and lectures to give he continued on with us in these shadow lands. This time, however, for *his* benefit he now lives "there" sustained by that same life-giving presence that he knew here; yet in such greater abundance, seeing the God of Jesus Christ whom he loved so dearly face to face. That one who moved him to tears time and time again here on earth, now moves him, I think, to dance and to walk with victory in the light of His presence.

When my five-year-old son, Jonathan heard that Pop Pops had died, he looked somber for a moment and then said, "You know Mom, every time someone who loves Jesus dies, I think the devil gets a little bit smaller." Perhaps Jonathan you are right. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." We will miss you Dad, but keep dancing in the presence of your beloved resurrected God.

James Loder: Our Christlike Father and Gracious Friend

by TAMARA TISS

Ms. Tamara Tiss, the youngest daughter of Dr. James Loder, is an attorney in Minneapolis, Minnesota where she lives with her husband Andy. She received her B.A. degree from Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota and her J.D. from the University of Minnesota School of Law. Tamara is passionate about reaching out with the love of Christ to others and hopes someday to go with her husband on the mission field.

LET US PRAY: O Lord, our hearts are heavy today with the pain of the loss of our dear father, husband, friend, teacher, counselor, and beloved brother, James Loder. He has blessed us all beyond all measure with his kind and loving concern for each and every one of us here in this chapel today. Even now, by the power of your Holy Spirit, we feel his arms embracing us with the same care he had for us while he was on this earth. We know that he is with you in your blessed loving care and that he is also always with us by your Spirit. We pray we may feel the assurance of your presence at this time, and know in the very depth of our being that you, O Lord, are always with us, that you will never leave us nor forsake us. May we remember that it was your love

and your Spirit that spoke to us though James Loder, and that even if he is no longer physically present with us, you always are with us and nothing, not even death, can separate us from your love. May we feel, right now, that love and that graciousness of spirit that was so evident in my father, and realize that his gracious spirit was a gift directly from you, oh Lord, and that you are with us always. Amen

I am the Tami of the lectures. My father and I loved spending time together. We loved just to talk together. We also loved to read Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers mysteries together, or C.S. Lewis books, and we loved to watch Colombo together. When my sister and I were younger, my father read all of the C.S. Lewis "Narnia" books to us, which had a wonderful impact on us. My father called me "Charlie" or "Charles" as a nickname, which I loved. My father loved to laugh. He and I also enjoyed reading the Charlie Brown "Peanuts" cartoons together. He was also a superb artist. When I was little, he taught me to draw and he always praised my efforts. His birthday was on December 5th, and I used to send him mystery stories and, among other things, jelly beans, which he loved.

One of the things that so deeply impressed me about my father was that he was so interested in *everything*. Any topic of conversation I brought up was fascinating to him, and he always wanted to know the deeper meaning of everything. At one point, my father's mother told a story about my father when he was in kindergarten. The kindergarten teacher said, "Every day we read a story, and after the story is over, Jimmy gets up and wants to tell us what the story *means*."

Even if he was busy, my father would always make time for me. As a teenager, whenever I felt lonely or needed to talk (which was at least once a day), he would always make time for me. He would sit there and literally he would listen to me for hours, he never turned me away and would always offer such wonderful encouragement. If I was ever concerned about whether I had made a correct choice or decision, he would always look at me and say, "You can't make a mistake, Charles." What he meant was that, in the Lord, God works everything for good for those who love Him. What a blessing that was to hear, and how much in line with God's grace that statement was.

The gentleness and the joy my father had was mind-blowing to me. He was so unlike the tense, achievement-oriented culture we live in—he had the opposite perspective. He always broke out of the "nine dots." Having had him as a father, I know I have been given a rich and everlasting gift that will never leave me. A feeling of being truly loved and not only loved, but delighted in, even as the Lord delights in each one of us here today. It was as

if my father felt deep down that Christ was present with him continually. He would always say to me, "Whenever I feel tired, I just pray, and the Lord is right there! He is just right there, every time, and he gives me strength beyond what I could ever imagine."

Good fathers are so rare. I am sure there are those of you here today who never had a father who was loving and caring, or perhaps never had a father who ever hugged you or told you he loved you. Worse yet, there are those of you who were severely abused or neglected by your father. That is why sometimes it is hard to understand or accept that incredible love God has for us. We just cannot accept it, we feel we are unworthy of it, or feel that such a great transcendent and healing love simply could not exist, at least not for us.

But each one of you here today knows that James Loder was not only my father, not only Kim's father—he was a father to all of you, he was a friend to all of you; a father and a brother and a friend. I would like to acknowledge to you today that, in the Lord, James Loder was as much your father as my father, he was as much your friend as he was my friend. And I would like each and every one of you to know that whatever qualities you loved in my father, those are qualities that God has in his relationship to you. Through the love my father had for you, I hope you will begin to understand and realize the love that God has for you. And that is exactly what my father would want.

In speaking of his own impending death and resurrection, Jesus said to his friends, "For the moment you are sad at heart; but I shall see you again, and then you will be joyful, and no one shall rob you of your joy." You will all see my father again—and in the meantime, you will feel that deep and wonderful love of my father through Christ's indwelling presence. So you see the love you experienced through my father will never, ever leave you. It will be with you forever!

"And when our mortality has been clothed with immortality, then the saying will come true: 'Death is swallowed up in victory! O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and sin gains its power from the law. But God be praised, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I know that my father would like to say to all of us here today, along with Paul in the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians,

Therefore, [because death has been defeated] my beloved brothers, stand firm and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, since you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58).



THE FAMOUS "NINE DOT PROBLEM" THAT FIGURED PROMINENTLY IN DR.

LODER'S TEACHING (LEFT: UNSOLVED; RIGHT: SOLVED), WHICH IS A DEMONSTRATION OF THE POWER OF THE HUMAN MIND TO RECONSTITUTE THE RELATIONSHIP OF FIGURE TO GROUND, AND THUS SOLVE PROBLEMS. THIS PROBLEM ILLUSTRATES THE THIRD MOVEMENT OF THE LOGIC OF THE SPIRIT, ACCORDING TO DR. LODER. SEE *THE TRANSFORMING MOMENT* (COLORADO SPRINGS: HELMERS AND HOWARD, 1989), 35-7.

Ruination unto Redemption in the Spirit: A Short Biography of a Reformed “Wise Guy”

by DANA R. WRIGHT

Dana R. Wright is Assistant Professor of Christian Education at the Seminary and Book Review Editor of the Princeton Seminary Bulletin.

DR. JAMES E. LODER RUINED my life once. Two times! The first time was in 1982, before I ever met him. I had graduated the year before from Fuller Theological Seminary with an M.Div. degree and a concentration in Christian Formation and Discipleship (Christian Education). These credentials certified my call to ministry, a call that would take root in the pastorate as a Minister of Christian Education within a vital, interdenominational congregation in Seattle, Washington. I was so excited about my new position, my chance to help lead a congregation to the upper regions of evangelical sanctification in the name of Jesus Christ. With a Bible in one hand and the latest faith development strategies I had learned at Fuller in the other, I launched my campaign to advance the cause of Christ by moving people through ever-higher stages of meaning-making. However, just less than a year after I began my pastoral labors, some prankster put me on to a book called *The Transforming Moment* and with seduction born of understatement said to me, “You might want to take a look at this.” I took the bait and bought the book the following day. For the next month I read it three, maybe four times, finally admitting to myself that it was beyond me. I didn’t understand what the author, James Loder, was getting at exactly. I only knew he was “getting at” something far deeper and more compelling than anything I had read before in the field of Christian education. Yet while the book possessed an intellectual “beyond me” that was frustrating even while it was alluring, it also pointed to a “beyond me” with which I was familiar, the “beyond me” of the Gospel which I knew from Scripture or from worship. And so, right at the dawn of my promising religious career in the Emerald City, raising a family in the context of a supportive and generous-spirited congregation, well-liked and confident, I knew I was undone. I was ruined intellectually and I was ruined professionally, and I knew I had to find a different way to make sense of this thing called *Christian* education. But even while I continued to function fairly successfully in the practice of congregational education as I

understood it, and as my congregation appreciated it, the knowledge of my professional ruination soon secreted into the labyrinthian recesses of my own self-understanding. Soon, ruination was not merely a career issue or an intellectual issue for me—it had become a matter of life and death. Here in the midst of a ministry which seemed to be flourishing, where all of the dominoes I had lined up seemed destined to stand, now the domino I was and the dominoes I lined up were tumbling down around me before my eyes. Ruined once. The first time!

About six years passed by before my ruination at the hand of Dr. Loder struck again. I got wind that his off-campus seminar entitled “The Creator Spirit and Faith Formation” was scheduled at Seattle’s First Presbyterian Church for May 3–6, 1988. I signed up, sensing perhaps a chance to meet the catalyst of my ruination and to neutralize its effect. But whatever I expected to accomplish during those three days in May of 1988, I got way more than that for which I had bargained. Expecting intellectual stimulation and maybe even a good argument around which I could administrate my ruination with some dignity, I found instead that the ruination lay deeper than I dared imagine, deeper than my rather serious-minded and rather eclectic evangelical imagination had yet dared even contemplate. I had to go deeper. I was compelled to go deeper, or live out my life and my vocation with a sense of having betrayed the very Source of it all. My ruination was bigger than I thought, and so was my redemption. In three short days in May, 1988 I had grown out of my evangelical skin like a snake molting from its dead cells in anticipation of a new springtime. Or to use the language of Dr. Loder, I had wised up to the fuller dimensions of the Reality that had taken hold of me, and having “wised up” I knew I could never “wise down.” Over the next thirteen-and-a-half years I would continue to “wise up” further in the company of the man who became my *Doktorfater*, friend, and colleague. And now, with his passing from our midst, I think a great deal about that very “wise guy” who ruined my life once. Two times.

About a year ago I sat down with Dr. Loder in the dining room of Mackay Campus Center, a local restaurant, even his own living room, to ask him to tell me the story of his own ruination unto redemption by the Spirit. I wanted to know how he had become a “wise guy.” I had heard bits and pieces of the story of his “upwising”—from his lectures, his books, our previous conversations, and hearsay—but now I wanted him to tell me in one piece how “life in the Spirit” unfolded for him. I wanted to know how it happened that his life and vocation and imagination came to embody so compellingly this strange “logic of the Spirit.” I would like to share with the many *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* readers who have taken his classes, read his books or heard

his lectures, or who perhaps received counseling and encouragement from Dr. Loder over the past forty years, a small portion of what he told me during our eight uninterrupted hours of informal conversation. I took this conversation, as I think he did, as something of his testimony about the unfolding of God's faithfulness in his life and ministry among us. He was so grateful for the opportunity to tell it. Consider it the testimony of a "wise guy" who now lives safely outside harm's way in the witness protection program of all time. No names have been changed to protect the not-so-innocent. I hope I have captured something of the richness of his testimony, something of the joy and gratitude and wonder he felt to God for having lived this story. The only scandal which follows here is the scandalous behavior of *Spiritus Creator* going about the reckless ruinous work of redemption.

Dr. Loder talked sometimes about the "positive aggression" which the Spirit fosters in our lives, and this theme emerged early on in the interview when I asked him how his early interest in philosophy was redirected into the (at that time) rather intellectually anemic field of Christian education. He told me that in his senior year he and several other students refused to take D. Campbell Wyckoff's course in Christian education because it supposedly lacked philosophical depth at the foundational disciplines level (an act of positive aggression no doubt!). So Wyckoff in his own wisdom (certainly a reciprocal act of positive aggression!) gave them permission to make up their own course at a depth that would satisfy both themselves and academic requirements. In a powerful way this effort to put together an *ad hoc* course initiated Dr. Loder into what would become his lifelong quest—to critique the conceptual inadequacies of the field of Christian education at the meta-theoretical level and to reconstruct them according to the integrity and coherence of what Kierkegaard called "the Positive Absurd" or what Paul Lehmann described as the God-man structure of reality. Yet for all the conceptual brilliance which fueled Dr. Loder's thought, the intellectual task would not be for Dr. Loder merely intellectual, the result of some kind of scholarly ambition or need to thrive academically. For him, the life of the intellect must be articulated out of one's indwelling of one's existential condition before God, and must reflect one's personal knowledge. Thus, in telling his story, Dr. Loder saw his early struggle to find the deeper intellectual sources for Christian education in the context of his own existential confrontation with God during the tragic death of his father. Out of a palpable sense of despair over the loss of his dad, the young seminarian cried out to God from his Nebraska bedroom to "*Do something!*" And at that moment James Loder experienced what David Ford calls an "overwhelming" of the Gospel. As he later recalled it, this experience of Christ after his

father's death "scandalized" the despair he felt, ruined it, and placed it in the service of the Presence of Christ.¹ He arose from this experience to sing "Blessed Assurance Jesus is Mine," a testimony of new found faith in Jesus Christ and a scandal to philosophical sophistication.

Knowing that what he had experienced of Christ could not be explained and dismissed in psychological terms, he returned to Princeton and told his story to a sympathetic Swiss theologian named Hans Hoffmann. Hoffman put the young prodigy on to Kierkegaard as one who might offer him a way to continue to make sense theologically and philosophically of this transformative experience. This connection to Kierkegaard would turn out to be monumental. Awakened to the ruminations of one who knew the deeper topography of the mind of Christ, Kierkegaard would provide Dr. Loder with a lifetime of "language for my head" that would never cease to challenge his own faith-seeking-understanding. Under the impetus of this Danish connection, Dr. Loder followed Hoffman to Harvard Divinity School, being one of the latter's hand-picked students selected for a year-long immersion in interdisciplinary studies there. Over the next half decade he would earn both a masters degree in theology (1958) and a Ph.D. in practical theology (1962), and receive in the interim a Danforth Grant to work and study at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas. Through these years of academic immersion at the highest level, Dr. Loder would engage some of the greatest minds in theology and the human sciences of that day—Talcott Parsons, David McClelland, Paul Tillich, James Luther Adams, Robert Bellah, Harvey Cox, Seward Hiltner, Karl Menninger, Paul Pruyser, and others. But through it all he continued to find deep Kierkegaardian echoes in all he learned, echoes that originated from a deeper source of intelligibility that both confirmed and yet challenged some of the underlying theoretical assumptions upon which much of what he had learned was based. He recalled, for example, that as he listened to Dr. Tillich lecture on the third volume of his systematics, the lectures seemed to be "cribbed right out of Kierkegaard." Through this immersion in these critical disciplines, what he called in the interview my "Harvard influence," Dr. Loder began to lay out the conceptual coordinates of his neo-Parsonian action theory based on the dialectical relation of transformation to socialization, a theory crucial to his later construction of the *analogia spiritus* at the heart of practical theology.

¹ As Dr. Loder recalls it, in his experience of the presence of God after his father's death he picked up Emil Brunner's book *The Scandal of Christianity* and literally "recognized" its truthfulness.

As he became aware of the need for reconsidering the foundational disciplines in practical theology and its subdisciplines like Christian education, mentors like Hoffman affirmed his decision to invest his life in “doing something” about deepening the theoretical self-understanding of Christian education as an interdisciplinary form of practical theology. “Harvard” and “Kierkegaard” were providing the young scholar with the intellectual resources out of which a practical theology of extraordinary interdisciplinary breadth and convictional depth would unfold over the next forty years, ever growing in imaginative scope to conform to the enormity of the Gospel. Eventually Dr. Loder would find in and through Kierkegaard and others the Christological framework that would provide theological intelligibility for a fully interdisciplinary understanding of the relation of divine and human action in practical theology. But before such understanding could fully emerge, Dr. Loder’s life had to be ruined unto redemption. The ruination would come after Dr. Loder had established himself as one of the brightest young minds in the field of Christian education.

In 1962 Dr. James Loder was called to Princeton Seminary to teach the foundational courses in Christian education. During this time his growing criticism of Christian education as an underdeveloped theoretical discipline took shape through his interactions with students, with faculty, and especially with the works of major figures in the field of that day—Randolf Crump Miller, C. Ellis Nelson, James Smart, and John Westerhoff, to name a few. During the decade of the sixties he taught, wrote, and published in the field of Christian education and continued to develop critiques of these major figures in religious education. He also worked to reshape the doctoral program in practical theology generally and Christian education in particular. These efforts resulted in Princeton attracting higher-level doctoral candidates in Christian education than ever before, students whom, as he expressed several times in the course of the interviews, he would hold in high regard as codevelopers with him of the program. Dr. Loder indicated to me in the course of these interviews that this reshaping of the doctoral program in Christian education as a constructive practical theological enterprise, and its complementary development of the fivefold interdisciplinary structure of doctoral level studies in practical theology in general, was “pretty much . . . my architectural contribution” to the seminary.²

² Some faculty would no doubt disagree with Dr. Loder’s recollections of these matters. They would also challenge his understanding of Practical Theology and seek to provide more autonomy among the subdisciplines than he would, perhaps with less concern for metatheoretical coherence and integrity among all of the subdisciplines. But I think it is

By the late 1960s Princeton's doctoral program in Christian education was attracting a higher caliber of students committed to the interdisciplinary and constructive approach Dr. Loder had learned at Harvard. His M.Div courses in Christian education were vital and energetic, and he relished the confrontative nature of pedagogy in the Vietnam years, when students challenged authority with much more reckless abandon than they do today, and dared professors to teach them anything relevant or they would walk out in protest. His long service to the church as a mentor for a generation of pastors and scholars was now underway.³ Yet everyone who knew Dr. Loder, especially after 1970, would affirm that the true generative source for his long scholarly career and for his influence in the lives of so many comes not out of his academic credentials alone, his scholarly achievements, or his sharp-minded critiques. What made Dr. Loder compelling to those who knew him was that they sensed he had been grasped and shaped by a divine Reality in whose care Dr. Loder "suffered divine things" for the sake of Jesus Christ and for us. The experience which opened up the convictional dimension that would shape Dr. Loder's mature integration of "Harvard" and "Kierkegaard," determine his grasp of practical theology and Christian education, and challenge his students to take the Gospel seriously was his 1970 accident on the New York thruway.⁴ This experience, recorded in his groundbreaking book *The Transforming Moment* and relived in so many of his classroom lectures or conversations with his students since then, became the catalyst for Dr. Loder's radical redefinition of the theory and practice of Christian education. After 1970 the reality of his participation in the "fellowship-creating reality of Jesus Christ" made available "in the Spirit" and awakened in him through "the accident" that "ruined him unto redemption" became his primary means of testifying to the "logic of the Spirit" as he understood it and lived it out in our midst. When I asked Dr. Loder about what changed in his understanding and practice of Christian education after 1970, he told me that his focus before 1970 on a psychoanalytical model of conflict-learning in the dialectic of transformation-socialization had to be radically reconceived in the light of convictional knowing, which is human knowing transformed according to the divine self-knowledge made available Spirit to spirit. After 1970 Dr. Loder was graciously "compelled" to rethink the relation of divine and human

important to consider how he saw practical theology as a discipline worthy of profound intellectual and convictional integrity.

³ Several of his former students are now engaged in writing a *Festschrift* in his honor, which is due to come out in the first half of 2003.

⁴ See *The Transforming Moment* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989), 9-13.

action “beyond Harvard”—that is, in four dimensions corresponding to the nature of the Reality he had formerly been seeking to reduce to two dimensions under the “Harvard influence.” The dynamics involved were no longer able to be limited to the concerns and competencies of the human spirit, for now the divine agency he had experienced in the accident had to be taken seriously. And this is no easy matter in a scientific culture. Christian education had become for Dr. Loder, in a way preaching had become for Barth, an “impossible possibility,” but a possibility nonetheless that demanded an interdisciplinary theological science to spell out its conceptual dimensions. But more importantly, the convictional courage to risk the effort had to have time to germinate. Dr. Loder told me it took him fully two years after his ruination to find this courage and to change his academic vocation and his counseling ministry to conform to the logic of the Spirit, as he would later come to name it. As a sign that Dr. Loder’s experience “belonged to the church,” he would also secure his ordination in the Presbyterian church at this time.

We are now able to gain a sense of how the logic of the Spirit became the grammar of his own life, transforming his scholarly career according to the larger dimensions of life in the Spirit. The accident “ruined” his life by putting his vocation and his own existential identity to death on the New York interstate. Having “wised up” at this father’s death to the movement of the Spirit, he could not “wise down” even under the weight of his Harvard legacy which sought to bring the Spirit under the aegis of socialization and professionalization. Two years after the accident, fighting considerable skepticism from some of his colleagues who regarded his “turn to the Spirit” a version of experiential theology unfit for Reformed theological consumption, Dr. Loder concluded that his ministry could only take place “in the Spirit” if it was to be truly redemptive practical theology in the Reformed tradition. Now he began a relentless pursuit to connect his earlier insights about the human spirit to a more adequate theology of the Holy Spirit.

What emerged after 1970, and what Dr. Loder now recognized, was that the pattern of the human spirit which he had been investigating through his work at Harvard and his initial career at Princeton Seminary had an analogical relationship to the pattern of the Holy Spirit he had experienced in the accident. In the next few years, his faith seeking understanding led him to engage works like Regin Prenter’s *Spiritus Creator* and George Hendry’s *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* to find ways to articulate the analogy of the spirit both with convictional integrity and within the parameters of scientific discourse. Preeminently he would act upon the church’s confession that our human participation in the work of the Holy Spirit, not the transformational

capacities of the human spirit alone, finally makes human transformation transformational. The academic result of Dr. Loder's new understanding was his book *The Transforming Moment*, a book that not only articulated Dr. Loder's emerging views on the *analogia spiritus* but also effectively challenged on that basis the near normative status which James Fowler's faith development paradigm enjoyed in many religious education circles at the time. The two theorists in fact met in a debate sponsored by the Religious Education Association in Lansing, Michigan, in 1982.⁵ When I asked him about this debate, Dr. Loder resisted the temptation to reduce the work of the Holy Spirit to a license to engage merely in academic one-upmanship, for finally academic debate held little interest for him except as it served the testimony of the Gospel in a scientific culture. As he was in his earlier days, Dr. Loder was pursuing a better understanding and articulation of the dynamics of Christian education, but now his goal was to understand and articulate this dynamic taking the Holy Spirit's activity in human transformation as seriously as possible. Some seventeen years would pass after the debate before Dr. Loder released what some might consider his full-fledged rejoinder to Fowler's *Stages of Faith*, a book entitled *The Logic of the Spirit: Faith Development in Theological Perspective*. If we ask, "What took him so long?" the answer, I think, reveals this lack of interest in "playing the game" of academic politics. Indeed, during those seventeen years Dr. Loder had set about to construct a theological framework for life in the Spirit, grounded in the Chalcedonian Reality in which he came to believe the early church had discerned something of the normative structure for human understanding of divine and human interaction according to the nature of Christ. This work took shape primarily in relation to his dialogues with theologians T. F. Torrance and Harold Nebelsick and in particular with physicist Jim Neidhardt, with whom he would coauthor the book *The Knight's Move: Relational Logic in Theology and the Sciences*. In a lively, six-year-plus collaboration Loder and Neidhardt would make connections between theology and the human and natural sciences that would lead them to see that the paradoxical structure of the hard sciences illuminated in quantum reality, for example, bore striking resemblance to the paradoxical structure of Chalcedon. Awakened now to the cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary power of "complementarity" in physics and in Christology, Drs. Loder and Neidhardt now gained confidence to develop and articulate the full explanatory power of the *analogia spiritus* as the basis for Christ-culture dialogue. Together they would draw

⁵ The two authors wrote up their critiques; they are published in *Religious Education* 77 (1982): 133-48.

insights from natural scientists like James Clerk Maxwell, Michael Polanyi, Albert Einstein, Nels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg and Illya Prigogine; from human scientists like Sigmund Freud and Jean Piaget, and from theologians like Karl Barth, T. F. Torrance, Wolfhart Pannenberg, the early Church Fathers, and especially the ever-present Kierkegaard, to make their case. In all of this work Dr. Loder maintained his concern to develop a conceptual groundwork for critical confessional practical theology, one with extraordinary interdisciplinary breadth and profound convictional depth, not only for the church or for Christian education ministries but also as a possible basis to guide the church's testimony and claims for transforming the public square as well. Looking back on *The Knight's Move* Dr. Loder admitted that the Christological dimension of "life in the Spirit" should have had more emphasis, for it is "in Christ" that the logic of the Spirit has its ultimate grounding. This concern for Christological concentration and even a *theologia crucis* emerged more preeminently in recent years for Dr. Loder, I think, and this emphasis came out in the interview in Dr. Loder's concern that in Christ the Spirit deals definitively with the negation at the center of the human condition. According to Dr. Loder, this emphasis was not sufficiently stressed in *The Knight's Move*.

In all of this scholarly activity, we must understand that Dr. Loder sought to participate in the movement of the Holy Spirit driving him to indwell the human condition at its deepest, broadest, and most threatening dimensions. He never tired of saying that the work of the Holy Spirit is to put us into the world, never to take us out of it. The modern problematic at the heart of contemporary culture was for Dr. Loder the crisis of the absence of spirit in science and the absence of science in spirit. For him the loss of the spirit of the mind in modern technocracy and the loss of the mind of the spirit in so much so-called "spirituality" elaborated a crisis that goes far deeper to the heart of things than the current obsession in practical theology for "public" relevance. Christianity, and in particular the Reformed tradition, possessed, he believed, the conceptual and convictional resources to redefine scientific culture itself and to ground scientific culture in hidden orders of intelligibility that are life-giving according to Jesus Christ, who became "life-giving Spirit." In the interview Dr. Loder rejoiced that Princeton Theological Seminary, with its commitment to confessional depth and interdisciplinary breadth, lay in close proximity to Princeton University, and he found the symbolism of this geographical proximity illustrative of a theological proximity that needed to be maintained and articulated at the highest levels of scholarship. In Dr. Loder's fertile imagination the apologetic and confessional dimensions of faith came together in the Spirit of Christ to form an alternative relational

ground integrating every level of human action toward the transformation of all things in Jesus Christ. The church had an extraordinary gift to give the world, he told me, and the world had considerable wisdom to offer the church. This mutual giftedness found its "Yes" in Jesus Christ, who defined the terms of the mutuality and in whom God was working in the world through the Holy Spirit to bring about the integration (the integrity) of all things.

As Dr. Loder neared his retirement, his desire to continue to generate imaginative explorations into the discipline of practical theology continued unabated. In 1998 he finished *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective*, an alternative to Fowler's influential *Stages of Faith*. Days before his untimely death on November 9, 2001 he substantially finished his important book *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*, a book which explicates his theory of Christian education in the Spirit based on his popular ED105 lectures at the Seminary. After completing this book he wanted to work on a serious examination of the potential impact of Kierkegaard on practical theology, connecting a concern for responsible breadth and convictional depth in theological education that has defined his career with Kierkegaard's critical genius. He also wanted to write an introductory text on practical theology for seminary students and a commentary on the Gospel of John to show the hermeneutical significance of the transformational pattern for biblical studies.

I had wanted to interview Dr. Loder in so much more detail concerning his work and his vision for practical theology and Christian education in the months following these April 2001 chats. I wanted to talk with him about those things that were still "beyond me," those things to which I had "wisened up" and could not "wise down" that he knew so well. And I wanted to spend time with my friend. Considering he had ruined my life once, two times, I owed this much to him. I have felt for some years that Dr. Loder's potential contribution to the church, to practical theological scholarship, to Christian education, and even to scientific culture remains underappreciated, mostly misunderstood where it is known, and vastly under-studied. We now have a chance to appreciate, to understand, and to study the intricacies and profundities of his incredible imaginative vision. I foresee a series of dissertations and perhaps even a conference or two focusing on his contribution or the issues he raised emerging in academia over the next twenty years, and I know Princeton Seminary will want to play a major role here. I think we cannot lose if this happens. Certainly this investigation of his work should not, and I believe will not, emerge to shape a "Loderian school," for that would be a denial of the very heart and soul of his scholarship, his person, and everything

for which he stood. If anything, I would venture to say that the more we find ourselves penetrating to the core of his thought, the closer we penetrate the heart of our own ruination at the hands of the One who “ruined him unto redemption.” Dr. Loder will point us to our ruination posthumously just as he always pointed us to our ruination when he lived among us, for in and through ruination comes redemption. Of course, I, and we, would rather have the “wise guy” with us. But it is not to be. There are no more live interviews. Just a few books. Lots of papers. Memories. Sadness. Gratitude. And perhaps in the near future some prankster will hand an unsuspecting pastor somewhere a book called *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit* by James E. Loder and with seduction born of understatement say to her, “You might want to take a look at this.” And another life will be ruined.

“Oh LORD God, How
Am I to Know?”

The Pentateuch and
Contemporary
Understandings of
Truth

by DENNIS T. OLSON

Dennis T. Olson is Professor of Old Testament and the author of numerous books and articles, including The Death of the Old and the Birth of the New: The Framework of the Book of Numbers and the Pentateuch and Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses: A Theological Commentary. He delivered this inaugural lecture in Miller Chapel on December 5, 2001, marking his promotion from Associate Professor to Professor.

LAST SUMMER I was sitting at our kitchen table, reading a *Time* magazine article about the end of the universe.¹ Scientists agree that our universe is expanding. Tens of billions of galaxies, each containing hundreds of billions of stars, are all rushing headlong away from each other in the aftermath of the cosmic Big Bang which occurred some fifteen billion years ago. But scientists have disagreed about how all of this will end. Will the galaxies continue to fly apart forever, their glow and heat fading until the cosmos grows cold and dark? Or will the expansion of the universe slow to a halt, reverse direction under the pull of the combined gravity of all these galaxies and stars, and then eventually send these billions of galaxies crashing back together in a final, super-heated, apocalyptic Big Crunch? The Big Crunch scientists like to quote the poet Robert Frost, “Some say the world will end in fire, / some say in ice, / From what I have tasted of desire / I hold with those who favor fire.” On the other hand, scientists who believe the universe will exit in a slow, cold disintegrative fade prefer the poet T. S. Eliot: “This is the way the world ends / Not with a bang but a whimper.” In light of recent discoveries, the article concluded that T. S. Eliot was probably telling the truth: the universe will end in a cold, icy whimper, but not until another ten thousand trillion trillion trillion trillion trillion trillion years. The article notes that humans will be long gone by then, surviving at most for one or two billion years more as our sun slowly heats up and eventually boils off the earth’s oceans. So perhaps from the particular context and perspective of most interest to us as humans in our small solar system, Frost had it right after all: “I hold with those who favor fire.”

As I sat at the kitchen table, my eighteen-year-old daughter, Kristen, breezed by and asked cheerily, “So what are you reading about, Dad?” Now

¹ “The End of the Universe,” *Time* (June 25, 2001), 48-56.

you need to know that there is a history between my daughter and me. She is our doubting Thomas, our Qoheleth who questions all conventional wisdom, our faithful prodigal who cries, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" She and I have had many long dialogues about God, life, love, and the meaning of it all. So I told her that I was reading about scientific views about the end of the universe. Predictably, she took the bait. She stopped in her tracks, her eyes brightened, and she slid into a nearby chair. Suddenly, we were into one of our talks about life, death, and God. "Life is so weird," she said. "People live, they work hard, and then they just die. You're buried or cremated or whatever, and then you're supposed to go to heaven. What does that mean? Is it all true?" We talked a long time about weighty matters, probing the meaning of the end of the universe and the end of life. She told me the next day that she had introduced the topic to a group of her friends later that same evening, engendering in her words "a great discussion." She added with a wry smile, "You know, Dad, I really enjoy our big, deep conversations." One of the unique attributes of the human animal is this wondrous capacity and passion for big, deep conversations, its ability consciously to reflect on itself and the world, on truth and the meaning of it all.

In what many call our postmodern context, this human quest and yearning for truth and knowledge about God, humans, and the universe has been seriously threatened and eroded. As seminary professors, we hear the laments of students who are dazed and bewildered by today's multiplicity of perspectives in the disciplines of philosophy, theology, sociology, history, the sciences, and the study of the Bible. What is truth, and how do we live it out? What understanding of God is true? What reading of a biblical text or what construal of the whole Christian thing is true, and how do we arrive at such a conclusion? These questions echo the plaintive lament of an elderly and impatient Abraham yearning for the fulfillment of God's promises in Genesis 15, "Oh LORD God, how am I to know?" (Gen 15:8).

The big, deep conversations about truth are often lodged in the disciplines of philosophy and theology. In a time such as ours when the debates about the nature of truth are in some turmoil, it is important for biblical scholars to be attentive to these conversations. I have noticed a tendency in some of these discussions to relegate the Bible to the role of a voiceless object for investigation rather than a genuine partner in the conversation. I want to argue in my remarks this afternoon that Scripture itself, as a rich and complex canon of interpreted experience, offers to us important insights into the nature of truth and truth-seeking about God, ourselves and the world. For the purposes of this lecture, I confine myself to five insights into the nature of truth

and truth-seeking which emerge out of reflections on the Pentateuch or Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament in Genesis-Deuteronomy.

(1) *Postmodern challenges in religious truth-seeking (a hermeneutics of suspicion, deconstruction, pluralism, and the like) have seeds at least as old as the garden of Eden and the tower of Babel.* The crafty serpent in the garden of Eden in Genesis 3 is the first biblical character to apply a hermeneutics of suspicion to the word of God. God had commanded the human in Genesis 2, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen 2:16-17). But the serpent convinces the woman that this is an ideological lie. The "real" truth, says the serpent, is this: "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:4-5). The serpent claims, in other words, that God just wants to keep the humans ignorant and less than God. Eat the fruit and they will become God's equal. The humans will not die because God will not be able to destroy them. However, the serpent's words obfuscate and mix truth and falsehood. Yes, it is true, the humans do not die on that day when they eat the fruit. The serpent is correct on that score. But the rest of the biblical story makes clear that the reason the humans do not die is not God's weakness. God had the power to destroy the whole human experiment; the flood story in Genesis 6-9 makes that clear. The reason God allows the humans to live is God's continuing commitment and compassion for the humans in spite of their disobedience.

The entire story of Adam and Eve's rebellion in the garden of Eden in Genesis 3 swirls around issues of truth: knowing the truth, skewing the truth, hiding the truth, and dodging the truth. From Eden on, human truth-seeking will be flawed and corrupt, entwined with secrecy and shame, suspicion and envy, power and violence. So follows Cain's murder of Abel in Genesis 4 and the interplay of corrupted truth and worldwide violence at the beginning of the flood story in Genesis 6: "The LORD saw that . . . every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually . . . The earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen 6:5, 11).

The pluralism of languages and the challenges of communicating truth are implicit as we move on to the story of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9. The narrative begins in a primeval time when "the whole earth had one language and the same words." The unified global community builds a city and a tower on the model of a Babylonian ziggurat, a tall pyramid-like structure ascended by Mesopotamian priests to communicate with the gods. The construction of the tall tower is motivated by a human fear of fragmentation and chaos: "otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the

whole earth" (v. 4). God discerns that the heaven-storming tower built by humans in order to make a name for themselves is just the first of untold horrors that the worldwide church of human potential may construct for itself. Thus, God scatters the human community into its various nations and cultures across the earth and confuses their language. From Babel on, humans will be inextricably caught in webs of conflicting perspectives, counterbalancing powers, and difficult communication across boundaries of culture, time, and language. Such pluralism is God's strategy for limiting the damage humans can do to themselves. We seek truth within the realities of a God-given pluralism of perspectives and languages. It is a pluralism that will not soon go away.

(2) *The primary Hebrew noun for "truth" (ʿemet / אֱמֶת) in the Pentateuch signifies both relational trust as well as a more objective testing for truth.* The Old Testament word for "truth" has as its root the verb *ʾmn* / אָמַן, "to be reliable, sure, firm, enduring, trustworthy," and in the causative Hiphil stem, "to stand firm, to trust, believe in." The object of the trust is typically a person, a message, or a promise. The root is related to the word we often append to the end of our prayers to God, "Amen," affirming the truth of what we pray and the trust we have in the one to whom the prayer is addressed. Three observations may be made about the use of the word *ʿemet* in Genesis-Deuteronomy:

(a) In five of its eleven occurrences in the Pentateuch, *ʿemet* ("truth, faithfulness") is paired with the word *ḥesed*, "steadfast love, enduring loyalty." This fixed word pair, "steadfast love and faithfulness" is used to describe both human-to-human relationships (three times) and the divine-to-human relationship (two times). In the dramatic and definitive self-revelation of God's character to Moses on Mount Sinai, the LORD proclaims, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love (*ḥesed*) and faithfulness (*ʿemet*) (Exod 34:6). Truth here involves a character of reliability and trustworthiness in relationships over time, grounded in past experience and extending in confidence into a yet unseen future.

(b) Five other occurrences of the word *ʿemet* have to do with determining truth as more objective fact-finding through evidence and testing, particularly in legal investigations involving the determination of guilt and innocence. In Deuteronomy, diligent inquiry is required in order to test the reliability of hearsay evidence and to determine "if it be true (*ʿemet*) and established (*nākōn*) that such an abhorrent thing has been done among you" (Deut 13:14; 17:4; see also Deut 22:20). Material evidence and the testimony of witnesses provide grounds for determining the truth or *ʿemet* of a matter.

(c) One other use of the word *ʿemet* combines the two senses of personal trustworthiness and the more objective seeking of truth based on evidence and testimony. In Exodus 18, the Midianite Jethro instructs his son-in-law Moses to share the heavy burden of adjudicating disputes within the community by appointing a number of additional judges who will serve alongside Moses. Jethro enumerates the qualities such judges should possess: "Look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, men of truth (*ʿemet*) who hate bribes" (Exod 18:21). Truth and the character of trustworthiness is linked with fearing God and hating bribes. This Midianite wisdom from outside Israel is adopted by Moses and incorporated later in his final words of teaching to a new generation of Israelites in the book of Deuteronomy. In the section of Deuteronomy's laws concerning the appointment of judges, Moses issues these instructions to the judges and provides us some insight into Israel's understanding of truth and its relationship to justice:

You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue (Deut 16:19-20; see also Exod 23:8).

Our modern Western assumption about judges is that their primary role is simply to apply the rules or laws that the legislating body of the nation or community has established. Bernard Jackson has argued that this modern Western model of judges is different from the one presupposed in ancient Israel. Jackson writes:

The judges are here [in Deuteronomy] told simply to act justly and avoid corruption. They are not asked to follow any particular rules. I am not, of course, suggesting that they are being given an entirely free discretion. The passage has clear wisdom connections, as seen by the proverb used as a motive clause ["for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right"—v. 19]. That seems to me to be a clue as to the kind of criteria which the judge is expected to apply: his sense of justice is to be tempered by the conventional norms of practical wisdom.²

Judges did not mechanically apply laws. Rather, they sought to negotiate and arbitrate disputes and so work toward a consensus of the community. In communities structured by kinship and tribal forms of alliances as in ancient

² Bernard Jackson, "Legalism and Spirituality," in *Religion and Law: Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, ed. Edwin Firmage et al. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 245.

Israel,³ the primary goal of judges and their truth-seeking was the restoration of the community and the relationships involved in the dispute.⁴ Judges were selected because they were respected as “wise, discerning, and reputable” (Deut 1:13). Part of truth-seeking involved a rhetorical transaction of trust between actual judges and a real-life community, leaders and followers, experts and lay people. Such truth-seeking is as much about building trust and restoring relationships as finding and knowing the “facts.”

At the same time, these instructions to judges affirm the need to strive for some sense of objectivity and impartiality. “You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes” (Deut 16:19). Michael Goldberg has argued that this prohibition of bribes is a unique element in comparison to other ancient Near Eastern conceptions of judges.⁵ The practice of offering a gift to the judge in order for a verdict to be rendered in one’s favor was a common and accepted practice in the culture of the ancient Near East outside of Israel. Goldberg traces the reason for Israel’s unique prohibition of bribes in court cases to its unique conception of God. Deut 10:17 affirms that “the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing.” This affirmation occurs in the context of God’s election of Israel as God’s own people, an election founded on God’s spontaneous and unmotivated love for Israel. Israel brought no bribe or gift to the table such as superior strength, material possessions, or moral righteousness to motivate God’s election.⁶ Thus, the ideal judge of truth in the Old Testament holds in tension two dimensions of truth or *’emet*: testing truth with some measure of impartiality balanced by practical wisdom and reconciliation within the rhetorical context of a real-life community of trusting relationships.

³ Kinship and tribal structures remained important in ancient Israel, even during and after the time of the Israelite monarchy. Cf. Timothy Willis, *The Elders of the City: A Study of Elders-Laws in Deuteronomy*, ed. Dennis T. Olson (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001).

⁴ Robert R. Wilson, “Israel’s Judicial System in the Pre-Exilic Period,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 74 (1983): 229-48, esp. 235-40; and Moshe Weinfeld, “Judge and Officer in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East,” *Israel Oriental Society* 7 (1977): 67-76.

⁵ Michael Goldberg, “The Story of the Moral: Gifts or Bribes in Deuteronomy,” *Interpretation* 38 (1984): 15-25. Goldberg cites several Near Eastern examples of judges expecting bribes or gifts. Even some of the wisdom sayings in the book of Proverbs assume this Near Eastern practice of giving gifts as bribes for favorable treatment (Prov 17:18; 21:14). Cf. also 2 Chron 19:6-7.

⁶ Dennis T. Olson, *Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses: A Theological Reading* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 52-8.

The tests for distinguishing true and false prophecy in the Pentateuch have a similar dual dimension. On one hand, true prophecy must demonstrate some degree of an objective (if not always precise) correspondence between the prophet's predictions and what actually happens "out there" in the real world of history.⁷ The law concerning true and false prophets in Deut 18:22 states,

You may say to yourself, "How can we recognize a word that the LORD has not spoken?" [Answer:] If a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD but the thing does not take place or prove true, it is a word that the LORD has not spoken.

But if the event did happen as the prophet said it would, that would be evidence that he or she is a true prophet.

Thus, for example, the historical report of the actual events of Babylon's capture of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E. and the exile of the people of Judah recorded in 2 Kings 24-25 is copied from the narrative of 2 Kings and attached to the end of the prophetic oracles in the book of Jeremiah (chapter 52). The historical report of the exile verifies that Jeremiah with his oracles of judgment against Judah was indeed a true prophet.

On the other hand, there is a second and even more important criterion for a true prophet. The prophet must demonstrate and encourage loyalty and love for the LORD alone rather than any foreign gods. Loyalty to God, integrity, and trust are important criteria for who speaks the truth along with a degree of correspondence to a perceived external reality (Deut 13:1-5).

(3) *Humans in the Pentateuch are given only partial glimpses of God and the truth of God's promises.* In matters of truth about God and God's promises, humans receive genuine but partial glimpses, fleeting encounters, provisional signs of some larger truth or future fulfillment. Abraham cried to God, "Oh LORD God, how am I to know?" (Gen 15:8). God answered Abraham's question with repeated verbal assurances that Abraham would become a great

⁷ Compare John Barton, "History and Rhetoric in the Prophets," in *The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility*, ed. Martin Warner (London: Routledge, 1990), 51-64; Benjamin Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40-66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); and David Lyle Jeffrey, "How to Read the Hebrew Prophets," in *Mappings of the Biblical Terrain: The Bible as Text*, ed. Vincent Tollers and John Maier (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1990). Sommers and Jeffrey note how the prophets interpret present and future historical events in light of patterns discerned in earlier traditions, both prophetic and Pentateuchal. Barton argues that the writers and editors of the prophetic books used some interpretive license in shaping their descriptions of historical events to fit their message. There was not always an absolute one-to-one correspondence of prophecies and external events. Prophetic oracles underwent a process of selecting, editing, shaping, and reinterpreting in light of new historical events.

nation with innumerable descendants and a land to call their own (Gen 12:1-3; 17:15-22; 18:10). Abraham had a vision in which God laid God's very life on the line in a mysterious covenant ceremony in which the fiery torch of God's presence passed through the middle of split animal carcasses, a pledge that God would keep the promise or become split in two like the halved animals (Gen 15:7-11, 17-21; cf. Jer 34: 18-20). Every evening Abraham saw the stars of the heavens which would be the number of his descendants. He saw with his own eyes the wide expanse of Canaan, the land God promised that his descendants would inherit (Gen 13:14-18). In the end, Abraham held with his century-old hands the promised child, Isaac, the one tangible link to God's promised future (Gen 21:1-3). At the end of his life, Abraham bought a modest plot of land for an exorbitant price as a burial plot for his wife Sarah. The cemetery was a small but real down payment on the whole land of Canaan that eventually would be given to his descendants (Gen 23:1-20).

When God calls Moses to lead the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt in Exodus 3-4, Moses offers five objections why he ought not accept this call. One of Moses' objections is this: "But suppose [the Israelites] do not believe me or listen to me, but say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'" God responds to Moses' concern by giving him three "signs" or wonders that will convince the people: Moses will be able to change his staff into a live serpent, he will be able to make his hand leprous and then instantly heal it, and he will be able to change the water of the Nile River into blood (Exod 4:1-9). These are glimpses, proleptic signs of God's much greater power which will work through Moses as he will eventually lead Israel out of Egypt.

Although Moses is led to a uniquely profound and intimate knowledge of God that surpasses all other humans,⁸ still Moses is allowed to see only the back side of the form of God (Exod 33:20-23). Moses does not and cannot see the full face of God. The image is a metaphor for the hidden and incomprehensible side of God which no human can know.⁹ There will always be some mystery in the understanding of God's character. But there will also be enough truth to pass on trust and obedience to God to the next generation. As Moses tells the new generation in Deut 29:29: "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our children forever, to observe all the words of this teaching (this *tôrâ*)."

Although mysteries remain hidden, God makes the revealed things accessible and near at hand to human knowing, a kind of knowing that leads to loyal commitment and active obedience.

⁸ Cf. Exod 33:17; Num 12:6-8; Deut 34:1-10.

⁹ Samuel E. Balentine, *The Hidden God: The Hiding of the Face of God in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe (Deut 30: 11-14).

In the Deuteronomic vision, that nearness and accessibility of God's partial but sufficient truth is accomplished through two means: a written scripture which contains the wisdom of the dead (the book of the teaching or *tôrâ* of Moses) and new words from the LORD which will be spoken through a new prophet like Moses. Moses promises Israel that after his death "the LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet" (Deut 18:15). The truth of these new prophetic voices will be judged alongside the "book of the *tôrâ* of Moses" (Deut 31:9-13). The interplay of a Mosaic written tradition and the possibility of new prophets suggests a fruitful balance and dialogue between the relative stability of a written tradition along with dynamic possibilities for new words from God.

Such renegotiations of older traditions are already embodied within the Pentateuch itself in the gradual merging and juxtaposition of varied traditions (for example, the earlier Yahwistic and later Priestly traditions) in Genesis-Numbers as well as the addition of the quite distinctive voice of the book of Deuteronomy to form the full Pentateuch. Moreover, the theme of the final chapters of the book of Numbers (chapters 26-36) focus on the new generation of Israelites who are born in the wilderness and now prepare to enter the new promised land of Canaan. These final chapters highlight the new generation's faithful reinterpretation and renegotiation of older traditions, laws, and narratives for its new time and circumstances. This new generation on the edge of the promised land functions as a paradigm for each succeeding generation of the future, honoring the past but also renegotiating its traditions in the face of new realities.¹⁰

In Deuteronomy, the written "book of the *tôrâ* of Moses" (a designation which tradition eventually extended to include not only Deuteronomy but the entire Pentateuch) recognizes itself as a secondary and humanly-mediated

¹⁰ Dennis T. Olson, "Negotiating Boundaries: The Old and New Generations and the Theology of Numbers," *Interpretation* 51 (1997): 229-40; and Dennis T. Olson, *Numbers* (Louisville: John Knox, 1996), 157-93.

tradition. The only primary, unmediated, and directly-written words of God in the Pentateuch are the two stone tablets with the Ten Commandments which the text reports were the only words "written with the finger of God" (Deut 9:10). These stone tablets engraved by God were placed prominently "in" the so-called ark of the covenant. The ark was a box or shrine which Israel carried through the wilderness and eventually placed in the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple. While the stone tablets were kept "in" the ark, Moses instructs the Levites to place his book of the *tôrâ* "beside" the ark rather than *in* it (Deut 31:26). This placement alongside the ark and not in it was a sign of the derivative and secondary authority of Moses' book of the *tôrâ* in relation to the Ten Commandments. At some point, the stone tablets of the Decalogue (written, according to tradition, by God's own finger) and the ark itself disappear off the stage of Israel's history, presumably during the Babylonian destruction of the Jerusalem temple or some other destructive event. Thus, we have only "the book of the *tôrâ*," a humanly mediated word of God as an adequate though interpretive tradition by which each succeeding generation tests new words from God and seeks truth. Like all human knowing, discerning truth in conversation with the biblical tradition is an interpretive process that is provisional and partial, but also adequate and sufficient to sustain the life and hope of a community of faith.

This partial and provisional character of the knowledge of God stems in large part from the divine habit of working in ways that run counter to human convention, expectation, and wisdom. Throughout the Pentateuch, God repeatedly defies human custom. God chooses time and again the younger sibling and not the expected eldest son for the chosen line. God chooses to work through the barren woman, the slave people, the foreign woman, the stranger, the alien, the little ones (Numbers 14), the ones whose power is gone (Deuteronomy 32). To know the truth about God requires a way of thinking and acting that runs counter to human expectations. What the apostle Paul said rings true of the God of the Pentateuch: "God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God" (1 Cor 1:28-29).

(4) *The Pentateuch displays an openness to wisdom and truth outside itself.* Jethro the Midianite (that is, a non-Israelite) shares with Moses his wisdom about reorganizing the community as a means of redistributing judicial responsibility (Exodus 18). Hobab, another Midianite, is asked by Moses to be Israel's guide on their march through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan (Num 10:29-32). What is remarkable is that this request is juxtaposed to texts immediately before and after in which God's leading Israel through the

wilderness by the pillar of cloud and the ark is highlighted (Num 9:17; 10:2, 33). The wisdom of a foreign human guide is portrayed in a complementary relationship with God's guidance and direction for the community through the wilderness. Elsewhere in the Pentateuch, a foreign prophet named Balaam speaks true oracles of blessing upon Israel (Numbers 22-24), and an alien king and priest of Salem, Melchizedek, blesses Abraham by God Most High (Gen 14:18-20). Jacob the Israelite looks into the face of his enemy and brother, Esau, the ancestral representative of the foreign nation of Edom, and says, "truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God" (Gen 32:10).

Moreover, the Pentateuch's strong affirmation of God as creator of the world and its people, making covenant with them and all creation (Gen 9:8-17), suggests that God may be at work and generating truth and relationships among people of other nations in ways the Bible does not know or narrate. An example is Hagar, the Egyptian slave of Abraham and Sarah, and her son Ishmael. This Egyptian slave woman is the only human in the Bible who names God ("You are 'ēl rōî / אֱלֹהֵי / God who sees"—Gen 16:13), and God promises to make of her and her son a great nation in a promise remarkably similar to the one made initially to Abraham and Sarah in Gen 12:1-3 and extended to their son Isaac. Like Isaac, Ishmael would also become a great nation with innumerable descendants, and God would be with him (Gen 16:10; 21:16-21). But the Bible does not narrate the rest of the story about Hagar and Ishmael, although it leaves us to assume that God continued to be active among them and presumably other peoples as well.¹¹ In Amos 9:7, for example, God informs Israel that God had performed exodus-like acts of deliverance and liberation for other nations besides Israel, nations like the Ethiopians and the Philistines and the Aramaeans.

Interestingly during the story of Israel's exodus itself, God is just as concerned that the Egyptians and Pharaoh know the truth about God's power and presence through the ten plagues as that the Israelites know (Exod 7:7; 14:4; 14:18). Moreover, Moses' appeals to God's international reputation among the nations carry enormous weight with God. Moses asks, what will the Egyptians and the Canaanites think if God destroys God's own people in the wilderness because of their rebellions at Mount Sinai (Exod 32:12) and again at the edge of the land of Canaan (Num 14:15-16)? This appeal to the nations along with other arguments from Moses are sufficient to change God's mind about the judgment against Israel (Exod 32:14; Num 14:20).

¹¹ Ishmael reappears briefly in the Genesis narrative to join Isaac in burying their father Abraham (Gen 25:9). This is followed by a genealogical listing of Ishmael's descendants (Gen 25:13-17). "Ishmaelites" appear in the Joseph narrative as caravan traders (Gen 37:25-28) and are mentioned again in Judg 8:24.

Thus, the Bible testifies to God's interest in what truths the other nations know about God and to God's often hidden activity among the other nations and cultures of the world.

Yet the proper use and integration by communities of faith of such wisdom and resources from outside the Bible and its traditions require discernment and testing. The Midianites offered helpful wisdom (as with Jethro and Hobab), but at other times the Midianites led Israel astray to worship other gods (Num 25:1-18). The foreign prophet Balaam blessed Israel but then also participated in luring Israel to idolatry (Num 31:16). The Egyptian gold taken by the Israelite slaves when they left Pharaoh and the land of Egypt (Exod 3:21-22; 11:2-3; 12:35-36) came to be used to build and adorn the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant, the seat of God's presence in the midst of Israel. Early Christian interpreters used this biblical image of Israel's plundering of Egyptian gold for the tabernacle as justification for the church's plundering of Greek philosophy for use in Christian theology. But this same Egyptian gold was also used to fashion the idolatrous golden calf at the base of Mount Sinai (Exod 32:4). The resources and wisdom from outside the community have the potential to aid as well as corrupt the truth-seeking of God's people. Discernment is necessary in deciding how and when outside resources and guidance are useful.

(5) *The truth about God, self, and the world develops over long years of experience, struggle, suffering, and transformation within the context of a human community chosen by God.* The nature of biblical truth is not understood as merely a set of propositions to which one can simply give or deny intellectual assent. I was a philosophy major in college, and one of my primary professors of philosophy was an ardent atheist. We became good friends and had many long and deep conversations about the existence of God and the nature of religious faith. He admitted that once some years ago he had become convinced of the truth of Anselm's so-called ontological argument for the existence of God. Anselm argued that God is defined as "that than which nothing greater can be conceived." And since to exist is greater than not to exist, Anselm argued, God must by definition exist in reality. My atheist professor was convinced by this argument for about a day or so. He believed God existed. But when he reviewed the argument the next day, he found what he perceived was a flaw so he changed his mind. He reported to me that even when he believed in God's existence for those twenty-four hours, he felt no feeling of love or trust toward the Deity and felt no inclination to worship or pray or otherwise engage God. It was just a matter of a cold, rational decision either for or against the proposition, "God exists." Needless to say, my philosophy pro-

fessor had not captured the fully existential character of the Bible's understanding of truth.

For the Pentateuch, truth is primarily about moving into a deeper relationship and understanding of God over a long period of time, sometimes a very long time. Abraham asked the question aching in his heart after years of waiting for a child and a land God had promised, "Oh LORD God, how am I to know?" (Gen 15:8). How was Abraham to know who God truly was? How was he to know that God's seemingly impossible promises would come true? He was old, and his wife was barren. It took Abraham decades of mistakes and detours, glimpses and signs, repeated assurances and dialogues with God in order to reach the point of truly believing and trusting in the truth of God's promises. God finally gave Abraham and Sarah their one child of the promise, Isaac. But then God tested Abraham's faith once more, even to the unimaginable point of commanding him to sacrifice his only beloved son in obedience to God (Genesis 12-22).

It took Jacob decades in exile from his home and family, struggling with his twin brother Esau, his uncle Laban, and even wrestling with and being crippled by God before Jacob came to a more mature understanding of the truth of God's blessing. Jacob came to see that divine blessing could be received only as a gift. Divine blessing was not something he could achieve by his own strength or cunning. As a result, Jacob who long sought only to grab for himself is able, for the first time in his life, to give away a gift and a blessing to someone else, to his enemy and brother Esau. "Please," Jacob says to his brother Esau, "accept my gift that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me" (Gen 33:11; see Genesis 25-33).

It took Joseph decades of experiences of nearly being killed by his brothers, being sold into slavery, and being imprisoned unfairly to mature from a seventeen-year-old brat who flaunted his status as father's favorite son into a leader within the empire of Egypt and a family member who could forgive his brothers. Joseph conveyed to his brothers the hard-won truth he had finally come to know: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" (Gen 50:20; see Genesis 37-50).

It took Moses a lifetime of experience as an Egyptian prince, then a fugitive and a refugee, a humble shepherd of sheep, and finally an embattled leader of a band of freed but rebellious slaves traveling forty years in the wilderness to develop as God's great prophet. And yet even the great Moses, because of the people's sin and his own sin, joined his generation in dying in the wilderness. Moses was privileged only to *see* the promised land of Canaan but not permitted to *enter* it (Deut 1:37; 3:23-29; 32:52; 34:1-12).

If it took Abraham and Jacob and Joseph and Moses a lifetime of struggle and transformation, it sometimes took the people of Israel generations. The repeated rebellions and conflicts of the old wilderness generation led to their death in the wilderness. The old generation was prohibited from ever seeing the promised land of Canaan. But their death made way for a new generation of God's people who learned from the past, renegotiated its traditions, and moved on into the promised land of Canaan (Numbers 13-14; 26-36).¹²

Much more could be said about the understanding of truth in the Pentateuch and throughout the entire biblical witness. But I have lifted up these five themes or insights:

- (1) the ancient seeds of our postmodern challenges,
- (2) truth as relational trust as well as more objective testing,
- (3) the partial but adequate character of the human knowing of God,
- (4) the Pentateuch's openness to wisdom outside itself about God and the world, and
- (5) truth as moving into a deeper understanding of God through a lifetime of experience, struggle, and transformation.

I lift up these insights in the hope that we are reminded to see again more clearly the richness, complexity, and nuance which the books of the Torah might contribute to our "big, deep conversations" about the Bible and truth. Through such conversations, we continue to struggle together to seek the truth as the people of God, asking Abraham's age-old question, "Oh LORD God, how am I to know?" In the meantime, we look toward an eschatological future and truth for which we hope and trust but do not yet fully know. In the words of the apostle Paul, "Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known" (1 Cor 13:12).

¹² Dennis T. Olson, *The Death of the Old and the Birth of the New: The Framework of the Book of Numbers and the Pentateuch* (Chico, CA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1985).

BOOK REVIEWS

Black, C. Clifton. *Mark: Images of an Apostolic Interpreter*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001. Pp. 327. \$20.00.

This is a reprint of a book written by a PTS professor of New Testament and first published in 1994. The book attempts to answer the question: how does the New Testament and patristic image of "Mark" develop, and what relation, if any, is there between this developing image and the actual author of the Second Gospel? Various aspects of this question have been studied extensively in the past, especially the second-century church father Papias' statements about Mark and the relation to canonical Mark of the "Secret Gospel" mentioned by Clement of Alexandria. But there has been no comprehensive study that moves systematically from document to document to trace trajectories in the development of the tradition about Mark. The book, then, makes a significant contribution—not by uncovering new sources, but by putting old sources together in a different way, in order to answer a question that has not previously been asked.

The monograph is well-written, well-organized, and sound in its scholarship. The style is a delight—clear, pithy, and often humorous. It is evident from the start what the author is up to and how he proposes to go about doing it, and he proceeds from point to point with admirable logic and clarity. He is very proficient in milking insights from seemingly small details, especially by noticing the way in which each of the various patristic writers who speak of Mark adds his own "delicate and interesting modifications" to the image of the Evangelist, so that "new tendrils of tradition slowly uncurl." He is fair in his evaluation of other scholars' work and level-headed in not claiming too much for his own theories. The notes are thorough but not burdensome, inspiring a basic trust that the field has been well-surveyed and enabling motivated readers to pursue their study further.

This book will certainly be of use both to scholars interested in the Gospel of Mark and to patristics scholars, and reference librarians should find it useful for its concise summaries and good bibliographies. It will also appeal to some less specialized readers, though others may find it not what they expected. Picking up the volume on "Mark" in a series called "The Personalities of the New Testament," one might anticipate a treatment of the "historical" Mark, i.e. a consideration of such questions as the identity of the author of the Second Gospel, his social setting (e.g., whether he was a Jew or a Gentile), the sort of historical and social milieu from which his Gospel emerges, and the concerns it is designed to meet. In Black's own words,

however, the bulk of his study “tells us less of who Mark was and more of how Mark functioned.” It is revelatory of this intention that, on the two occasions on which he speaks of Mark’s “personality,” he puts that word in quotes, referring to “the ‘personality’ of Mark in patristic tradition” and Mark’s “patristic ‘personality,’ if you will.” True, he does return in the final two substantive chapters to the question of the degree to which this “patristic personality” actually reflects the historical circumstances of the composition of the Gospel. But because his answer to this last question is so guarded (and rightfully so), some readers may wonder how much relevance most of the book has to their main interest, the actual author of the Gospel.

On the other hand, the depiction of biblical authors in later sources is itself an intriguing subject, and the fact that this study is being reprinted after only seven years suggests that there is more interest in it than one might think. In any case, the book belongs on the shelf of every dedicated fan of the fascinating and enigmatic Gospel of Mark.

Joel Marcus
Duke Divinity School

McKinion, Steven A., ed. *Life and Practice in the Early Church: A Documentary Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2001. Pp. 189. \$18.50.

This collection of primary texts introduces those who have little first-hand knowledge of the Fathers of the Church to their writings on the practice of church life from the Didache through St. Augustine. It targets an evangelical audience. The book is organized around activities of the community that correspond to some of our own practices today: baptism, worship, preaching and catechesis, eucharist, evangelism, and leadership. Noteworthy omissions are chastity, marriage, and funerary practices.

A short introduction prefaces each selection, apprising the reader of who the author is and what position he takes on each issue. Many of the major shapers of Christian practices are included: Ignatius, Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzus, (lots of) John Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine. The excerpts are taken from the noncopyrighted *Ante-Nicene Fathers* and *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. This decision, understandable as it is in order to keep costs down, excluded two important voices from the period, however, Denys the Areopagite and Maximus Confessor, whose views on Christian practice would have been a great addition.

The book itself seeks to recatechize those who have forgotten how the church acted, what it looked like, and how it took shape in its formative

centuries, when people were clamoring to pursue a fresh way of life in wholesome community. The collection could read as a challenge to the church growth movement that stylizes itself after the dominant culture to attract the unchurched. For the Fathers, becoming a Christian does not baptize the culture; rather, being brought into the church community inaugurates a new way of life of which the dominant culture is ignorant.

The selections recapture the drama and counter-cultural nature of becoming a Christian and creating a community that stood out from the crowd. Once Christianity triumphed and became the crowd, Christian practices lost some of their power and eventually were domesticated. Now the situation is again ambiguous. Understanding how it once was is a proper goad to churches seeking their own identity after Christendom. This collection offers easy access to early Christianity's daily life.

Ellen T. Charry
Princeton Theological Seminary

Long, Edward Leroy, Jr. *Patterns of Polity: Varieties of Church Governance*. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2001. Pp. 163. \$16.00.

Polity and church governance usually take a back seat to beliefs and church doctrine in seminary curricula and in the church at large, and *Patterns of Polity: Varieties of Church Governance* is not an eye grabbing title for a book. But Edward Long, Professor Emeritus of Christian Ethics and Theology of Culture at Drew University makes an excellent case for grasping polity as not just professionally important for seminarians and pastors but intellectually important for us all. I found myself thoroughly engaged by Long's presentation of his material and read the book in one sitting, a high compliment from me for a book on polity.

The book is by no means a definitive guide on all denominational polities. Long takes the reader through an exploration of polities as a methodology to understand a variety of faith traditions. My only complaint is that the epilogue, "Polities as Languages for Dialogue" was not a part of the introduction.

The book is divided into three sections and each section contains three chapters detailing specific polities. Part One, Governance by Bishops, includes Monarchical Episcopacy, Managerial Episcopacy, and Pastoral and Exemplary Episcopacy. Part Two, Governance by Elders, Appointees, and the Spiritually Mature includes Representative Eldership, Leadership by Appointment and Seniority, and Leadership by Discernment. Part Three,

Governance by Congregations, includes Connective Congregationalism, Associational Congregationalism, and Congregations without Over Structures.

The author sprinkles a touch of humor here and there. When describing the United Methodist *Book of Discipline* he says, "Complete mastery of its contents would require a major professional investment, but living under its provisions is possible because the governance works with carefully structured regularity (one might say 'methodically')." When discussing the agendas of the PC(USA) deliberative bodies such as presbyteries and its General Assembly he notes that time slots are provided for each item for discussion, and if deliberations on the floor are not completed in the allotted time, discussions are often postponed to the end of the meeting. He then comments, "if only academic faculties would take note!"

Presbyterians do not often find themselves in the company of Mormons, but Long's treatment of representative eldership as it functions in Presbyterian governance is followed immediately by a review of the polity and governance of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because both have elder leadership. This juxtaposition of two very different polities exemplifies the author's desire to make persons in one tradition aware of how another Christian group gives institutional form to their central convictions. The great difference between these two groups is that one is representational eldership or leadership (elected) and the other is designated leadership. Long notes that forms of designated leadership are generally found in churches that either eliminate the role of clergy or downplay its special or professional significance.

The book provides helpful insight across a broad spectrum of governance issues, such as ministerial candidates and how they fit a denomination's process. For example, in analyzing the Episcopal Church (Pastoral Episcopacy) Long says, "In a polity that connects the church mainly by pastoral functions, a great deal depends on having a clergy that responds to admonition and persuasion and that symbolically embodies the ethos that characterizes the church. This can place emphasis on the temperament (or spirituality) of the candidate more than on scholarly acumen or prophetic zeal."

This book would be a valuable tool for seminarians, pastors, and others in the church to read as part of a class, or as part of a reading group alongside Robert Wuthnow's *The Restructuring of American Religions* and Rodney Stark and Charles Glock's *Patterns of Religious Commitment*. Polities are not just church law. They are languages for dialogue.

Dean E. Foose
Princeton Theological Seminary

Bartel, Michelle J. *What It Means to Be Human: Living with Others Before God*. Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001. Pp. 108. \$11.95. Currie, Thomas W., III. *Searching for Truth: Confessing Christ in an Uncertain World*. Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001. Pp. 110. \$11.95.

"Christian faith is not about the mastery of ideas. It is about encountering the living God," writes Charles Wiley, an editor for the *Foundations of Christian Faith* series published by Geneva Press and the Office of Theology and Worship of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The series, twelve volumes written by theologians committed to the life of the church, promises engaging theological reflection for lay *and* clergypersons about themes from the Trinity, creation and new creation, and the Holy Spirit to the work and person of Jesus Christ, suffering and evil, and the church. Earlier texts, *Christian Worship* and *The Trinity*, are now joined by *What It Means to Be Human* and *Searching for Truth*, all of which "baptize imaginations" into the work of the Spirit through renewed theological understanding. With kudos to those responsible, I suggest such renewal will invite readers to an encounter with the living God *by means of* the theological ideas they explore.

Michelle J. Bartel and Thomas W. Currie III, two PTS graduates, stress the series' theme that "no one can be a Christian alone." An assistant professor of theology and ethics at Augustana College in South Dakota, Bartel suggests that this theme is synonymous with the word "human" itself. What it means to be human *is* living with others before God. Currie, the new Dean of Union Theological Seminary/PSCE—Charlotte, North Carolina, brings this necessity of human community to the fore in his reflections on confessing Christ as an act of love in an uncertain world. Being a Christian in *global* community means not only facing challenges but finding numerous opportunities for loving witness sustained by him who *is* the truth, the way, and the life.

What It Means to Be Human offers its readers plentiful and accessible connections to the humanly mundane yet inexpressible wonder of God-with-us. Bartel immediately challenges the mistaken notion that fallenness defines humanity—"we are only human after all"—with the Christian proclamation that *our creation by God* defines who we are as humans. Recalling the angel Dudley from the classic movie "The Bishop's Wife," she writes, "When humans give glory to God by excelling at who they have been created to be . . . then Dudley's words will find their prophetic fulfillment: 'Everything would be all right if only people could learn to behave like human beings.'" Another nice touch is in Bartel's governing images of the Garden and human gardening. She counters the expected sense of fallenness within the prover-

bial, biblical Eden with an unexpectedly recognizable sense of human, creative goodness in the activity of gardening. Challenging common misperceptions with gospel counterpoint, Bartel argues that “our humanity is not determined by our mistakes or our sinfulness but by the action of God to create us, call us, and cherish us as the very image of the Divine.” Currie also explores this “very image of the Divine” in his *Searching for Truth*, which is both theological exposition and gospel witness to those who lovingly live the truth of Christ in the face of hostility.

Currie invites us to deepen our understanding of Christian faith commitment through a lived hope in uncertain times. He confronts any simplistic sense of truth—e.g., that of the bumper sticker, “God said it, I believe it, and that settles it!”—with the powerful proclamation that Jesus Christ is the truth who will *neither* be possessed to be thrown at the world *nor* trimmed down to be made less offensive to human sensibilities. “Truth” in Currie’s witness is neither static nor harmless, but *a way of loving the world*, a personal participation in the Christian gospel whose key is the cross and whose preservation involves dying while seeing the face of love in an enemy or stranger. In his own words, the gift that confronts all followers of Jesus is “wrestling with the truth of Christ until we limp, giving lie to the notion that the truth is in our possession to do with as we please, just as it also subverts our clever schemes for rendering the truth harmless.” Relying on thinkers such as Lesslie Newbigin, Colin Gunton, and C. S. Lewis, as well as on substantial pastoral experience, Currie brings readers into discussions of pluralism, tolerance, and judgment, and then election, the Trinity, and baptism. The central clue to this “way of loving the world”—the cross—is given fourfold exhortation, while participation in the life of the risen Lord is given form in historical example and pastoral story. The most powerful example comes from the last testament offered by Father Christian de Cherge in a letter left to his family upon the event of his death at the hand of Islamic extremists in Algeria. I do not believe another homiletical anecdote could *be* more timely. Currie writes, quoting de Cherge, “And you also, the friend of my final moment . . . Yes, for you also I wish this ‘thank you’ [for my life]—and this adieu—to commend you to the God whose face I see in yours.” In prose and vivid image, *Searching for Truth* proclaims the cross of Jesus, publishes such truth in historic form, and invites readers to preserve the truth *by bearing witness* and *being sustained by* the truth, Jesus himself.

The *Foundations of Christian Faith* contributions by Bartel and Currie will undoubtedly strengthen any church library and a wide variety of adult/young adult education offerings. Bartel articulates good questions and accessible connections for these audiences. I tender some caution here with respect to

her clarity on theological themes, however. In her desire to connect daily human experience with aspects of Christian faith, she potentially obscures the readers' ability to understand theological themes and their applicability to the life of faith. Her discussion of the *Imago Dei*, for example, could suggest that the image of God in us consists first and foremost of relationship, then freedom, earthiness, and lastly diversity. Her ultimate intent is unclear. How does our earthiness connect with God's image in us? Where does "diversity" come from and how does it relate to the *Imago Dei*? Why is it important? The clarifying framework of traditional *Imago Dei* understandings—"characteristics of God that we have" or "what we *do*," or "who we *are* in terms of identity or relationship"—is left unstated. Clergy and laypeople alike thirst for the renewal of our common Christian heritage, but their questions about some of the basic tenets of Christian understanding may well remain unanswered.

With biblical, literary, and theological finesse, Currie invites readers of all stripes into the complex challenges of confessing Christ as an act of love in an uncertain world. He first wins a *critical* audience by asking—"How does *God* tell the truth?"—and by noting from Greek and Roman mythology that it is not necessarily obvious that God *would* tell the truth. The Holy One of Israel is soundly celebrated through biblical witness "not so much for merely telling the truth as for living the truth, keeping faith, and fulfilling the terms of the promise." Currie then draws in *literary* thinkers through the Karamozov brothers' struggles with what it means to love in truth without dismissing the world or dismissing Christian faith. Lastly, Currie secures his *theological* audience by connecting the sometimes ethereal doctrine of God's election to the inescapable, earthly community that *is* humanity: "Although we did not choose our enemies, Christ has not chosen us without them." Currie provides a wealth of insights for the clergyperson, educator, layperson, and young adult. An appendix containing questions for group discussion or personal reflection would have facilitated communal readings, however. That said, Geneva Press and the PC (USA) have reappropriated the half-century-old tradition of *The Layman's Theological Library* series with graceful care. On behalf of clergy and laypersons alike, I offer a word of gratitude.

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Lazareth, William H., ed. *Reading the Bible in Faith: Theological Voices from the Pastorate*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. Pp. 206. \$16.95.

This volume, edited by William Lazareth, Program Associate of the *Pastor-Theologian Program* sponsored by The Center of Theological Inquiry

and funded by the Lilly Endowment, testifies to the growing conviction among mainline Protestant leaders in the United States that to recover “a ministry of theological substance” is “of crucial importance for the renewal of the church” in the world. “Reading the Bible in Faith” originally named the theme of the first year of the Center’s innovative pastoral education program (1998–9). This continuing education initiative brought together a select, ecumenically-diverse group of pastors, prominent theologians, and denominational leaders for a year-long conversation (through regional conferences, common reading and writing assignments, and a national conference) concerning what it means to recover “the practices of Christian reading” in the context of the congregation. This resulting volume, *Reading the Bible in Faith*, contains excerpts from the writing projects of thirty-two of the sixty pastor-theologians who took part in the program, organized into two parts consisting of three chapters each (a complete list of participants is also included). Part One, “Holy Scripture,” consists of three collections of excerpts, each with brief introductions by Lazareth that examine (1) “The Hermeneutical Challenge,” (2) “The Passion of Christ” (Matthew 26–27), and (3) “The Binding of Isaac” (Genesis 22). These chapters together express different understandings of how Scripture as a whole (Chapter 1) or in crucial particular parts (Chapters 2 and 3) might be interpreted as authoritative Word in and for the congregation. Part Two, “Holy Church,” also contains brief introductions and excerpts collected into three chapters: (4) “Trinitarian Doctrine,” (5) “Divine Worship,” and (6) “Christian Proclamation.” Together these chapters attempt to develop a vital connection between a Christian reading of Scripture and the enactment of that reading within the theological practices of doctrine, worship, and preaching. Indeed, this second part suggests several innovative ways that ecclesial identity might be thought about and “enacted” within the life of congregations, thus providing worship, Christian education, or youth committees, as well as pastors, a valuable resource to aid the process of theological reflection on those committees.

The quality and depth of these short excerpts, written by a diverse group of pastor-theologians, vary considerably. Some read like outlines, albeit very suggestive ones (James L. Mays, Chapter 1, excerpt 6). Others are intriguing and suggest new possibilities for recovering ancient insights into hermeneutical and liturgical practices, such as Cynthia Jarvis’s call for the development of Christian Midrash as a way to read Scripture (1.2), Robert Hausman’s reflections on “Living the Narrative in the [*Triduum*] Liturgy” (5.26), and Denton McLellan’s advocacy for the recovery of the ancient *Tenebrae* service as a way to enact the Christian Story (5.27). Still other essays show considerable theological subtlety and interpretative acumen. For example, three

interpretations of the sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22)—“The Music of Failure,” by Thomas Renquist (3.14), “The Founding Vision of the Covenant Community” by Samuel Speer (3.16), and especially Robert Dahlen’s “Exile and Slaughter: The Authority of Scripture” (3.17)—each depict in very different ways the brutal but compelling authority of this strange text when it is imaginatively read. Finally, David Henderson’s reflections on “Irenaeus on the Rule of Faith” (4.19) effectively argue, in a way that sums up the thrust of the book as a whole, for an evangelical (i.e., gospel) hermeneutic of faithful reading which “demonstrated . . . [the] continuity of the Scriptures from beginning to end along with a radical newness to the gospel.”

Given the enormous crisis facing the mainline Protestant church today that this book and the educational initiative behind it assumes—its loss of cultural authority, its acculturation to relativism and its capitulation to ideological pluralism, the evaporation of its public identity, its dwindling numbers and its failure to attract “the best and the brightest” to leadership positions, etc.—a collection of short excerpts detailing ways we might better “read the Bible in faith” may not seem like much. But woven throughout this collection is the underlying conviction that, in a cultural context similar to that which the early church faced, something like a Christian trinitarian hermeneutic expressing the unity of God’s salvific purposes, and giving cohesiveness and depth to the interpretative imagination of the church, may be taking shape in the minds of many pastors. These women and men see themselves as practical theologians in the service of the Gospel and see their congregations as centers of constructive theological activity intrinsic to their identities as the people of God. *Reading the Bible in Faith* demonstrates at least that the theological academy, the Protestant church, a diverse group of pastor-theologians, and sympathetic financial and denominational agencies can work together to stimulate the kind of vital conversation that is needed today if the church is to live out its servant vocation in the world with integrity.

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Heim, S. Mark. *The Depth of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. Pp. 312. \$35.00.

With the appearance of Mark Heim’s *Salvations* in 1995, a boldly-revisionistic critique of the idea that the world’s religions, despite their contrastive starting points, culminate in the same end (viz. salvation, of a singular nature, indeterminate, but generally tinged with a Christian hue), pluralistic theologies of religion have begun to seem less authentically pluralistic than they

once did—and more untenable. While pluralism has hardly fallen out of fashion, its dominance is more sharply contested than ever before, thanks in large part to the clarity and rigor of Heim's contribution.

With Heim's newest book, *The Depth of the Riches*, the debate continues to change and its level rise. Still troubled by the pluralists' blithe denial of real particularity, a denial suggestive of flippancy toward the salvations envisioned by different religions, Heim pushes beyond the limits of his previous work by arguing that religious ends not only differ phenomenologically (Buddhist *nirvana* from Hindu *moksha*, and both from Christian salvation), they differ salvifically in that all religions attain their own ends, ends which are multiple and determinate. Instead of superimposing upon them a pallid Christian glow, Heim allows all ends to retain their own distinctive hues.

In his insistence on multiple religious ends, each one fulfilled and realized experientially, Heim differs from inclusivists who insist that all are saved, even if the ends they seek (*moksha*, *nirvana*, etc.) are not Christian ends. The salvations Heim envisions are thus as diverse as the religions themselves; as self-chosen ends, all are divinely affirmed; all, moreover, truthfully reflect a facet of who or what God is, a plenitude experienced in certain respects as personal and in others as impersonal or transpersonal. It follows that questions of ultimacy are purely perspectivistic: salvation for one believer would be damnation for another. As for Heim's perspective, it is unambiguous: Christian salvation (a good deal of the book is devoted to what that means) is *for Christians* unsurpassable. Note again the crucial difference from other inclusivisms: in being surpassable by the end envisioned by Christians, other religious ends are not on that account dead ends; *on their own terms*, all ends remain attainable.

If, as *The Depth of the Riches* argues, the fulfillment of all forms of post-mortem blessedness is an eschatological necessity, the complexities involved may seem absurdly Dantesque. As it turns out, however, the *Divine Comedy* enables Heim to configure his vision of multiple, conterminous salvations into a coherent whole structured upon the freedom, divinely sanctioned, to seek one's own destiny and have it, too. On the very real possibility, indeed the likelihood, that a *lesser* salvation (*moksha*, say, or *nirvana*) may remain to one set of believers (Hindus or Buddhists) a *greater* salvation than any other, Christian salvation included, Heim is melancholic, not burdened, and speaks of multiple salvations as providential. Why? Because—to put a twist on Dante's "His will is my peace"—our will is God's peace.

Winter, however, turns to spring as Heim warms to his main concern, a theology of religious ends so conceived that all salvations become grounded in one dimension or another of the triune God. As God is complex (imper-

sonal or transpersonal, as well as personal), so are salvations *necessarily* multiple. How, then, do all these wonderfully-suggestive correlations look from a history of religions perspective? Frankly, the particularities that Heim endeavors to “save” from departicularization seem very much imperiled when each is matched with a corresponding dimension of the God who is “being-in-communion.” Do not salvations that have been “saved” become intractably particular and resistant to further reduction? Apparently not. But, then, the right fit between theology and the history of religions is still so uncertain that, to attain the comprehensive theological coherence he wants, Heim simply has to have the creative freedom to tinker. As long as the ends retain their overall integrity, that is okay.

And they do. This bodes well. After all, a theologian who takes other religions seriously as empirical realities and not as neutered abstractions is about as rare as a religious end for which an eschatological fulfillment cannot be found! Not only that, on other religions as prisms for refracting the fullness of God into more varied hues, Heim is virtually unsurpassable.

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Princeton Theological Seminary

Craddock, Fred B. *The Cherry Log Sermons*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001. Pp. 115. \$19.95.

The Cherry Log Sermons is a collection of sermons by Fred B. Craddock, the Bandy Professor of Preaching at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University in Atlanta. I confess that I have never heard Craddock, and I have never read his sermons. My loss! But that loss only made my dry ground absorb with more delight as the rain fell on the unjust.

As I read these twenty sermons preached in the Cherry Log Christian Church in the mountains of north Georgia, I discovered several things. First, I discovered he was talking, not writing, to me. What a different experience in a book of sermons! Would that we who preach could learn to talk and not write. Second, Craddock teaches as he talks and teaches relevantly, so that we discover why Jesus told this parable, why Paul wrote that injunction. Third, he always arrives at Christ. Or rather, by way of a gracious telling, Jesus arrives for us. Fourth, we can learn from him without losing our own style. I hesitate to read sermons for fear I will unconsciously copy. But what we can learn from Craddock is to pay attention to the common stories of life. For instance, in “Who Am I To Judge Another?” he tells of finding a “cattywampus” gravestone—one that has been placed along the diagonal. This placement was deliberate, to match the deceased’s crookedness. Family and neigh-

bors said that since they could not straighten out the curmudgeon in this life, they had laid him out as he was, and would trust God to straighten him out in the next. Another, "Attitude Adjustment," is about losers. Craddock ends with a story about George Eliot's friend McCarthy, who was "a pearl of great price in a group of young people who were content with fake jewelry, as long as it was gaudy and would shine at parties." A sensitive and caring person, but considered "a loser," McCarthy told them that they did not have to buy friendship, and they did not have to buy love. "Just love and be a friend, that's all it takes." But none of his friends, except George Eliot, showed up at his funeral. Craddock then asks what could be done with a church full of losers like McCarthy.

Here are twenty sermons loaded with insight, humor, and kindness; and with Jesus Christ who brings the merciful judgment of God. I did wish that I could hear Craddock get angry. Of course, maybe his anger has mellowed into irony and sorrow. But I would have loved to hear him take on rapacious coal companies or politicians who feather their nests. However, this wise man is still preaching with the Spirit, and who knows what will come next?

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Lloyd-Sidle, Patricia and Bonnie Sue Lewis, eds. *Teaching Mission in a Global Context*. Louisville: Geneva, 2001. Pp. 151. \$16.95.

Thankfully avoiding the hagiography which is a common temptation of this genre, these passionate tales of mission encounter by ten professors, currently teaching mission at seminaries related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), faithfully witness to the astounding diversity and complexity of today's churches. The book may be an indication of the end of the post-1960s mission-challenged era when the call to participate in Christ's mission beyond our own culture was rarely heard in the churches and on the college and seminary campuses of the declining mainline denominations. While the stories told here may evoke memories of missiological conviction prior to the 1960s, they reflect little of the uniformity of those bygone days. The essays are true to Philip Wickeri's conclusion that, in the age of globalization and pluralism, "there can be no all embracing new paradigm of mission." I interpret the dissimilarity of these reflections on mission praxis in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and North America as a sign that these practitioners and teachers have paid careful attention to the actual experience of the Christians with whom they have been in mission.

In place of grand theories, the book presents a rich range of evocative missional metaphors and dispositions. Frances Adeney begins the collection by speaking of going "feet first" into mission, reciting her own journey as one of silence, protest, community, and conversation. From personal encounters with a wide variety of faith communities, Carlos Cardoza-Orlandi offers "the border" as the appropriate "symbolic/social space to engage in missiological reflection." Integrating mutuality, solidarity, marginality, and bold humility, Sherron George challenges "Presbyterians in the United States to go to the margins, to listen to the marginalized, and to allow God to transform you." Stanley Skreslet remembers his Christian friends in the Muslim world who were "examples of forthright witness that could not so easily be dismissed as acts of cultural domination or discounted as the mere outworking of a right-wing political agenda." Beginning with an expression of deep gratitude for his Christian family who suffered persecution both under Japanese occupation and the "anti-Christian government" of North Korea, Syngman Rhee's resounding testimony to the power of Christ's reconciliation reads like a biblical saga. Rhee recalls his escape to South Korea after the martyrdom of his forty-nine-year-old father, his training for ministry in the United States, and his participation in the civil rights movement, the Middle East peace process, and ongoing efforts toward the unification of the Korean people. Drawing on personal "lessons learned from the perspective both of the Black Church heritage and the Presbyterian tradition," Martha Snulligan Haney organizes her essay thematically around the themes of incarnation and Acts 1:8 and prophetically calls our churches to move beyond the "traditional, convenient, and familiar patterns of mission defined by paternalism, exclusion, and elitism." Philip Wickeri wants to reconceive of mission as hospitality, "a theme that is more adequately expressed in the sharing of narratives than in the construction of propositional statements." Scott Sunquist lifts up humility and hospitality, suffering and simplicity, scripture and clarity, and zeal and consistency as expressive of an Asian-Christian spirituality that may be instructive in our Western churches that have "not really accepted the fact that we have become a mission field." Bonnie Sue Lewis suggests that the practice of listening to God orders the missional practices of listening to and being hospitable to others. Finally, Darrell Guder characterizes missiology as an "obnoxious discipline" which moves "across the boundaries of our theological compartments and get(s) into everyone's business." He envisions the local congregation as the proper "focus of the discipline."

One final comment. I found the word "teaching" in the title somewhat misleading since the clear accent of the book is on the ways these teachers have been formed and transformed by their experiences rather than on the

actual practice of teaching mission. "Learning Mission in a Global Context" would more closely reflect the actual content of these provocative reflections on global missions.

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Carroll, John T., with Alexandra R. Brown, Claudia J. Setzer, and Jeffrey S. Siker. *The Return of Jesus in Early Christianity*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000. Pp. 236. \$24.95.

John T. Carroll, Dean of the Theology Faculty and Professor of New Testament at Union-PSCE, whose dissertation is now a standard resource on Lukan eschatology, is joined by contributing authors Alexandra R. Brown, Claudia J. Setzer, and Jeffrey S. Siker, all respected scholars in their fields. The authors aim "to profile New Testament and other early Christian teaching" about the return, or parousia, of Jesus. Consciously avoided are attempts to provide either a history of Christian eschatological reflection or a contemporary theology of the parousia. Readers will instead find here an accessible survey of what each NT writing, or group of writings, says about the topic. The method is primarily descriptive, mainly following the canonical order of books. Discussion of the historical contexts of the writings is kept to a minimum.

Carroll provides a close reading of parousia-related texts in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts (Ch. 1), Johannine literature (Ch. 3), and 1 Peter, James, Hebrews, and 2 Peter (Ch. 4). He points out the distinctive interpretation each author gives to Jesus' return (Matthew's concern for eschatological judgment, for example, or the "sharp accent on the eschatological present" in John's Gospel), though the dominant note in these chapters is the ubiquitous belief in the future return of Jesus itself, a conviction that never wanes (even in John's Gospel, where it is sometimes overlooked) in spite of a delay in its fulfillment. Brown discusses Paul's perspective on the parousia (Ch. 2), arguing that, while Paul draws upon existing traditions, the particular combination of resurrection and parousia expectations in 1 Corinthians 15, as well as some of its content, is generated *de novo* in response to problems in Corinth. Siker (Ch. 5) contends that the common idea that eschatology was downplayed in the second and third centuries needs to be corrected by a fresh appraisal of the relevant sources. He finds "an unresolved tension" between those who expected an immanent parousia and others who gave it little thought (with many "between these two poles"). Setzer (Ch. 6) points out that "Christianity wove its own distinctive messianic theory" from certain

Jewish “strands.” Yet she finds reason in the NT itself to think that much Christology was nonetheless formed in response to Jewish criticism of Jesus’ failure to fulfill a fairly “dominant strain in messianic thought” that anticipated glory rather than apparent defeat. Carroll concludes the book (Ch. 7) with a quick trip through church history, demonstrating the continuing though varied role of eschatology down to the present day.

Coupled with a careful and readable description of each writing’s treatment of the return of Jesus is a recurring emphasis on the rhetorical function of references to the parousia. Mark’s Gospel, for example, is seen to employ parousia teaching to support the conviction that Jesus is God’s agent of salvation, to motivate faithful living, and to nourish hope in the face of tremendous pressure. In some later NT writings, the pattern is one of “eschatological imagery in service of parenetic appeals,” though offering hope is often a motive here too. Critiquing the idea that Paul regularly puts the parousia in service of moral exhortation, Brown sees Paul appealing to the parousia predominantly to “encourage the hopeless.” Readers may question whether this reading fits Paul in every instance, but it is a valuable corrective to largely moralistic readings. Some may also wonder whether Carroll’s solution to threats of judgment in Matthew’s parousia teaching (namely that attention to the “values of justice and mercy” may safely eclipse stern warnings for modern readers resistant to such a message) is the best way to grapple with those hard passages, though Carroll himself calls his remarks only “one reader’s reflection” on that issue.

The Return of Jesus addresses a topic of intense interest to many people, doing so in a disciplined and suggestive way that is solidly grounded in the NT and other early Christian texts. Adult education classes and individuals curious about “what the Bible teaches” about the return of Jesus will find this to be a useful tool and a springboard for further study. Pastors and Christian educators who seldom mention the parousia for any number of reasons will find in this volume an informative, nonthreatening entree into the subject that at the same time makes a good case for the important and even necessary role of eschatology in the church today.

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Huchingson, James E. *Pandemonium Tremendum: Chaos and Mystery in the Life of God*. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2001. Pp. 230. \$17.00.

In *Pandemonium Tremendum*, James Huchingson takes as his starting point that scientific theories and technologies supply crucial metaphors for theo-

logical inquiry. Moreover, since the defining theory and technology of our age are respectively information theory and the computer, Huchingson focuses on these themes for theological inspiration. Specifically, Huchingson attempts to frame a theological metaphysics in information-theoretic terms.

Central to Huchingson's project is the following definition of communication: "Communication is a decision process wherein a field or set of possibilities is reduced to some smaller number or even to a single possibility by the operation of a decision agency." Accordingly, information arises in a communication context wherein decisions at one end of a communication channel reduce the possibilities at the other end. The greater the possibilities at one end and the tighter the reduction at the other, the more information gets transmitted. Huchingson takes this picture of communication and information, and translates it into a metaphysical picture of the divine life. Accordingly, the maximal set of possibilities constitutes a primordial chaos, what Huchingson calls the *Pandemonium Tremendum* (always capitalized and italicized). God, then, becomes the decision agent that reduces the totally unrestricted possibilities in the *Pandemonium Tremendum* to create the world. The world, in this model, becomes the output at the receiver end of the communication channel.

In Huchingson's information-theoretic metaphysics, the *Pandemonium Tremendum* rather than God becomes the final resting place of explanation. This is implicit throughout the text, but Huchingson admits as much at the end of the book, where he concedes "the ontological subordination of God to the *Pandemonium Tremendum*." Huchingson sees no way around this subordination. For Huchingson, a God who actualizes possibilities is a God who is limited and therefore cannot be ultimate. Huchingson therefore makes the totality of possibilities ultimate and subordinates God as the agent who sifts among these possibilities to create, sustain, and guide the world.

There are two problems here. One is theological: theology traditionally locates ultimacy in God and God alone. Huchingson, by contrast, locates ultimacy in the *Pandemonium Tremendum*. Why not, then, simply identify the *Pandemonium Tremendum* with God? Huchingson at times leans in that direction. For instance, he favorably compares the *Pandemonium Tremendum* with Tillich's God as ground of being. Given his project, however, Huchingson cannot reasonably make that identification. The problem (and this is the second and deeper problem facing Huchingson) is that the information-theoretic model he employs requires a decision agent to actualize the unbounded possibilities that make up the *Pandemonium Tremendum*. Clearly, within such an information-theoretic theological metaphysics, only God can

serve as that decision agent. But how can such a God arise given the ontological priority of the *Pandemonium Tremendum*? To his credit, in the last chapter of the book Huchingson frankly admits that this is a major conceptual weakness of his project. Unfortunately, throughout the book unwieldy circumlocutions about God's self-arising, self-constituting, self-positing, and self-deciding give the appearance that Huchingson has resolved the relation between God and the *Pandemonium Tremendum* when in fact a major conceptual lacuna exists between the two.

For Huchingson, the *Pandemonium Tremendum* is the totality of possibilities without any structure to privilege one possibility over another. Nonetheless, God as decision agent does privilege some possibilities to the exclusion of others. Since the *Pandemonium Tremendum* is completely undifferentiated but also ultimate, whence the differentiation needed to make sense of divine action and in particular of the world God created?

Huchingson's project founders because he has not taken his information model seriously enough. The reference class of possibilities that always forms the backdrop for a communication system is not an unbounded space of possibilities but is itself carefully chosen by the communication engineer to help solve the communication problem in question. Consequently, in Huchingson's information-theoretic analogy, the *Pandemonium Tremendum* ought to correspond not to an unbounded set of possibilities but to a limited set that will be further constrained as information is generated from it (cf., the frame problem in artificial intelligence). Theologically, this corresponds to God limiting the primordial chaos and then bringing order to it. This is not only more faithful to the Christian theological tradition but also more consistent with the information-theoretic framework that Huchingson appropriates.

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Rice, Howard L. and James C. Huffstutler. *Reformed Worship*. Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001. Pp. 233. \$17.46.

In *Reformed Worship*, Howard Rice and James Huffstutler aim to enrich the worship life of congregations by providing an historical overview of the Reformed liturgical tradition while offering practical suggestions for the renewal of worship. Rice, who was Professor of Ministry and Chaplain at San

Francisco Theological Seminary for twenty-nine years, and Huffstutler, who served as pastor of First Presbyterian Church in San Bernadino, California for thirty-seven years, seek to share their experiences and insights with adult study groups, seminarians, pastors, and others who plan or lead worship, in order to help churches navigate the choppy waters of worship in twenty-first century North America.

The authors' goals are lofty, and the results are mixed. They have succeeded in writing a book that is accessible to church members and clergy alike, although the simple style sometimes results in generalizations that are misleading or confusing. While most readers will not be bothered (or harmed) by the historical inaccuracies, liturgical scholars will find themselves cringing at certain misstatements, such as the assertion that the words of institution were included in the *Didache*.

Rice and Huffstutler work hard to delineate a liturgical theology that is truly Reformed, hearkening back to Calvin and the creeds of the church. They helpfully put forth some basic principles, many of which are expressed in the PC (USA)'s *Directory for Worship* (which, unfortunately, is rarely cited). They affirm the recovery of the centrality of the Lord's Supper, instruct their readers on the use of art and space, comment on the importance of silence, and point out the need to acknowledge mystery. Yet a number of crucial liturgical principles are overlooked. The importance of maintaining a link to the worship of the church through the ages and across cultures is never addressed. Confession and assurance are undervalued and misunderstood. Neither does liturgical language receive adequate attention; the prayer texts the authors provide are often too colloquial to bear the weight of worshipping the creator of the cosmos, and sometime even stray into a pseudo-therapeutic realm.

The authors are at their best when giving practical advice about various details of worship planning. They use a pastoral tone throughout the book, and one can imagine them leaning over their desks to instruct less-experienced pastors on their methods of ministry. Some of these suggestions are helpful (e.g., how to use the metrical index in the back of the hymnal, or when to start planning for Advent), while others (such as listing the contents of a wedding coordinator's tackle box) are unnecessary. The authors' awareness of the realities of ministry in smaller membership churches—often missing in books on pastoral ministry—is appreciated here.

For all their good intentions, however, Rice and Huffstutler have presented the student of worship with some serious problems. The chapter on the Service for the Lord's Day—which should have been the linchpin of the book—is full of missed opportunities for real teaching. The chapter on

funerals only furthers the culture-driven belief that these services are for psychological benefits rather than for proclaiming the resurrection, affirming the promises of the gospel, and telling once again the story of God's saving grace. Furthermore, the authors' suggestions for enlivening worship services are disappointing. Many of their ideas are ones that churches have been doing for years (having children process with palms on Palm Sunday, for instance), while others (such as humming hymns on kazoos while wearing Hawaiian shirts on a day named "Jubilee Sunday") cater to rather than counteract the entertainment-oriented mindset of contemporary American culture that undermines the integrity of worship.

In the end, there is little here that is innovative. Although Rice and Huffstutler articulate some helpful principles, unfortunately those principles are not well-illustrated. There is some solid instruction here and there, as well as some useful material. There is also material that is counterproductive, however, and the reader must be judicious. Use it as a starting place for conversation and reflection, or as a checklist for practical matters; but look elsewhere for well-wrought liturgical texts and profound insights into the renewal of Reformed worship in our time.

Kimberly Bracken Long
Drew University

Perdue, Leo G. *Proverbs*. Louisville: John Knox, 2000. Pp. 289. \$35.95.

Proverbs often remains on the margins of the teaching and preaching life of the church. The appearance of Leo G. Perdue's commentary in the *Interpretation* series is hence a welcome event, for this wisdom book has much to offer people of faith who wish to engage seriously biblical visions of morality. Perdue, professor of Hebrew Bible and President of Brite Divinity School, brings his many years of study of the biblical wisdom literature to bear on the interpretation of this difficult and sometimes unappealing book, thereby inviting students of the Bible to begin to attend to (or once again attend to) this resource for ethics and morality.

In the Introduction Perdue discusses a number of important issues bearing on the interpretation of the book, including the possible social locations of the sages who produced the text. In the section "The Message of Proverbs for the Contemporary Church," Perdue recognizes that the book intends for its hearers to develop a "critical, inquiring spirit, along with the virtues of prudence, insight, and knowledge that allow one through discipline to study and to embody the moral life of the sages."

Perdue next examines the first major section of Proverbs, chapters 1-9.

These chapters, he proposes, are comprised of a superscription and introduction (1:1-7), followed by ten "instructions" (interrupted on two occasions by wisdom poems), and conclude with a speech by Woman Wisdom in chapter 8 and a final poem on Wisdom and Folly in chapter 9. Perdue suggests that the "strange" or "foreign woman" so prominent in these chapters "appears to include a variety of identities: a prostitute, a fertility priestess, an adulteress, a worshiper of a fertility goddess, and folly." The other important female figure, Woman Wisdom, is intended "as a metaphorical personification of a divine attribute." Perdue believes that these initial chapters of Proverbs are best understood against the socio-historical context of the Persian period when the small colony of Judah was struggling to maintain its identity in the face of Persian imperial forces. In particular, the scribes who produced Proverbs 1-9 were aligned with a conservative priestly faction that sought accommodation to the Persian context. This faction opposed all (including revolutionaries) who would sow social discord, for this would threaten the fragile, but divinely ordained social and cosmic order.

In Proverbs 10-31 Perdue identifies eight further subsections comprised primarily of short proverb sentences. As with chapters 1-9 his discussion of these collections is divided into four parts: "Date and Provenance," "Literary Structure and Interpretation," "Conclusion," and "Theology." This structure is often helpful, though the "Conclusion" and "Theology" sections are sometimes redundant. Significantly, however, Perdue recognizes that these collections, like chapters 1-9, offer teachings which are essentially of a moral and ethical sort.

This insight is perhaps the most important aspect of Perdue's commentary. He is to be commended for underscoring the fact that Proverbs is most fundamentally concerned with the formation of moral character. He likewise recognizes the conservative nature of the book's moral vision and its interest in preserving the family unit. However, Perdue rarely critically engages this vision. The commentary may therefore invite unwarranted appropriations of biblical texts to legitimate the contemporary status quo. This is a disappointment. For the *Interpretation* series hopes each of its commentaries "both explains and applies, [offering] an interpretation that deals with both the meaning and the significance of biblical texts." Yet Perdue himself notes that his work (particularly the "Theology" sections) provides only the starting point for reflection "on the relevance or invalidity of wisdom teachings for theological and ethical understandings of the social realities and issues of the modern world." Perdue, probably rightly, has not attempted to provide an "application" of the message of Proverbs, but has left that task to the preachers and teachers of the text who must engage not only the biblical witness, but their own particular contexts as well.

Perdue offers an interpretation of Proverbs representative of the way most biblical scholars today understand the book. Students who wish to explore Proverbs further, however, will want to compare Perdue's work with William P. Brown's broader exploration of the moral dimensions of biblical wisdom literature (*Character in Crisis*) and Michael V. Fox's commentary in the more academically-oriented Anchor Bible series (*Proverbs 1-9*).

Timothy J. Sandoval
Candler School of Theology

Theron, Daniel J. *Out of Ashes: The Boers' Struggle For Freedom Through the English War 1899-1902*. Bloomington: 1st Books Library, 2000. Pp. 255. \$11.95.

This is a welcome addition to the growing collection of books describing war from the losing side. The author (PTS Th.D. and former professor) skillfully combines a very readable account of the major campaigns of this war with heartbreaking stories of the hardships endured by his mother, grandmother, great-grandfather, and other family members as they fled from place to place for more than a year in order to avoid interment in one of the infamous concentration camps. Theron's sources include recollections written down by his mother, stories told him by his father who fought in the war, and conversations with his grandmother and other family members.

Readers raised under English influence will recognize the war as the Boer War. This reviewer, brought up in England in the era, albeit waning, of the British Empire, was fed a steady diet of heroic stories of the valiant deeds of the British troops, such as the relief of Mafeking and Ladysmith, and the exploits of leaders such as Buller, Kitchener, Roberts, and Baden-Powell. Never mentioned, of course, were the hardships endured by the Boer forces and the terrible treatment of Boer civilians. These had been described in the British press during the war but never made their way into popular schoolboy stories. It was only later, after I first met Theron in 1952, that I started to read the "true story" of the Boer War. I am quite convinced that, if it had been written sixty years ago, Theron's book would have been an eye opener to me and especially to my mother. But more than likely she would never have believed it anyway. To her, it was inherently impossible for British troops to behave so badly. Such is the ability of the winners to forget the means by which victory was achieved.

It is probably a defense mechanism that we do not want to look at our enemies as real people. After all, it is hard to kill or mistreat people we know.

The value of Theron's book is that it paints a picture of what life was actually like for a Boer family during the war. Particularly touching are the experiences of the author's mother who was not quite seven years old at the start of the war. She was one of six children who had to share one small wagon with their mother as they fled for over a year. A minor but unforgettable piece of the story is how Theron's great-grandfather made space on his wagon for a small harmonium on which they played hymns each day as they fled before the British troops. The harmonium survived the war to become a treasured family possession.

Whether we call it the English or the Boer War, there is much food for thought in Theron's account. The military-oriented can find lots to discuss on the tactics involved on both sides when fighting a guerrilla type war; the religiously-oriented can debate how God might have viewed the prayers of both sides; the humanist can find plenty of examples of the inhumanity of which people are capable; and we can all ponder how much we have really learned from the mistakes of the past.

Bruce Gilchrist
Chappaqua, NY

Bunge, Marcia J., ed. *The Child in Christian Thought*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. Pp. 513. \$24.00.

The Child in Christian Thought exhibits a wealth of wisdom. Seventeen authors sketch theologians' perspectives on children, from Jesus and Augustine to Karl Barth and Karl Rahner. The book broadly overviews major historical currents, but mentions the significant insights of Two-Thirds-World movements only briefly in Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore's chapter on feminist notions.

This slight weakness is vastly offset by the book's strong contributions—discussions of how theologians envisioned the nature of children and the duties of parents, state, and church to nurture them; how these ideas relate to theologians' central concerns and social, cultural, and political contexts; and how these ideas ought or ought not to impact our present understandings of and care for children. Most helpful for enabling us to question our own perspectives are the juxtapositions, such as Jonathan Edwards' and Rahner's opposite views on salvation for children who die unbaptized; Rahner's and feminists' contrasting convictions about abortion; and differences between John Calvin and Barth on "original sin."

Theologians' concepts of "original sin" are displayed in almost all the essays, for these writers ache to halt the child abuse that distortions of that doctrine foster. Marcia Bunge's chapter is strongest in showing, through the work of Pietist A. H. Francke, that this doctrine can lead to great compassion for children, active engagement in their education towards "genuine piety and true Christian wisdom," and concern for the well-being and flourishing of poor children. Francke recommended many positive practices for creating homes and schools as "workshops of the Holy Spirit," and his central theological convictions and stirring example strongly espouse care for all children.

The book is also full of encouraging surprises, such as Judith Gundry-Volf's new insights into New Testament texts that we might think we already understand. Vigen Guroian points to John Chrysostom's lovely image of parents as artists. Cristina Traina concludes that studying Aquinas in his context forces us not to dismiss the ideal of stable, monogamous unions as archaic but "instead to ask why it has persisted against such apparently high practical odds in both Thomas's era and our own." One confusing surprise was that pacifist Menno Simons advocated not "sparing the rod." Equally startling is John Wesley's firmness about children's play, though his positive legacy persists in virtue approaches to education and in the current Bishops' Initiative for Children in Poverty.

Theologians who dealt the most with children include Friedrich Schleiermacher, who contributed insights into parental damage to children's emotional health, Horace Bushnell, who recognized the gospel "beaming out" in mundane tasks of childcare, Karl Barth, who fostered the communication of hope and possibility, and Martin Luther, who named parents' work a holy calling and prodded the wider community to fulfill other critical vocations for children's sake. Jane Strohl superbly outlines both the importance of Luther's question, "Indeed, for what purpose do we older folks exist, other than to care for, instruct, and bring up the young?" and the challenges of his answers.

The editor hopes that teaching "theological foundations for concern for children might help motivate the church to do more to address the challenges that children face today; to pay more attention to their spiritual and moral formation; to contribute more significantly to the public debate on children; and to help enact state and federal legislation and programs that can help families and children." Her book provides a tremendous basis for such education and will lead churches to consider more seriously the kind of nurturing programs they offer for the sake of their children and their neighbors, especially the poor. Significant practical models are offered by

Marcia Riggs' chapter on Mary Church Terrell and the Black Women's Club Movement.

The United Nations has declared this time the "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World." This book would equip pastors and congregations to lead more actively in that campaign.

Marva J. Dawn
Christians Equipped for Ministry
Vancouver, Washington

Grenz, Stanley J. *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000. Pp. 366. \$23.99.

Renewing the Center joins a burgeoning literature—*Reforming the Center*, *Reclaiming the Center*, *Restoring the Center*, etc.—that challenges right-left culture-war theological analyses and proposals. Grenz is concerned to delineate a third way for evangelicals, one that seeks to relate, but not capitulate, to postmodernity. He launches his argument with a theological chronicle of the changing evangelical scene from its pietist and Puritan ancestry through a period of scholasticism and fundamentalism, to the "neo-evangelicalism" that arose in the 1940s and continues to this day.

Like their forebears, evangelicals of the new millennium must engage their culture. Such engagement means dealing with postmodernism, separating the wheat of its realism, communitarianism, localism, and narrativity from the relativism and nihilism of its deconstructive interpreters. The author shows how this can work by examining some current theological issues—the relationship between theology and science and religious pluralism—lining out an alternative to conventional left-right evangelical opinion. Throughout, Grenz draws on his early research on postmodernism, his communitarian systematics, and his debt to Pannenberg, as well on a "convertive piety" which he holds to be "at the heart of evangelicalism in all its forms and permutations."

Readers unfamiliar with recent evangelical history will be interested in Grenz's detailed review of North American developments in terms of a bipolarity that has persisted through three theological generations. The difference he discerns appears initially in the contrast between the "rationalistic and culturally critical cast" of Carl Henry and the "irenical and culturally engaging" point of view of Bernard Ramm. The next generation is symbolized by Millard Erickson who follows the Henry tradition and Clark Pinnock who represents the Ramm legacy. Right now, it is Wayne Grudem on the

right and John Sanders on the left. The stage is set for a "reconstructive evangelical theology" that has a firm grasp on the biblical "belief-mosaic" but is open to the best of "postmodern sensibilities," a "reconstructive evangelical theology" moving in a "postfoundationalist" direction, with learnings from Plantinga's Reformed epistemology, Lindbeck's postliberal perspective, Pannenberg's eschatology, and DiNoia on the diversity of religions, all done in the new "conversational" mode of theology, with a "communitarian turn" to an "ecclesiological center."

Ecumenical readers and those in mainline/oldline churches who want to make their way out of the present culture-war polarities will find in evangelical Grenz a kindred spirit. Also to be appreciated is his commitment to the Great Story and christological center, with due recognition of the variety of its "local" readings. Grenz too has a Niebuhrian nose for the creatureliness and sin in every perspective, understood biblically long before postmodernists caught up with finitude and the fall.

But there are oddities and ironies here as well. How come a book arguing for the discovery of the center uses a twofold typology to understand three generations of neo-evangelicalism? Such a bipolarity misses the presence of the excluded middle that the Lilly-funded "re-forming the center" research turned up, a precedent for the very constituency Grenz wants to renew. It may explain why major evangelical theologians like Donald Bloesch who do not fall into the two-party mold have no place in the typology, and why the characterizations of partisans (Henry, as a case in point) sometimes appear force-fit. Further, ecumenicals who have lived through recent "with-it" eras of theology will sense kindred temptations in the buzz-wordiness of Grenz, with his preoccupation and sometime celebration of the "post-modern," "post-foundationalist," "post-evangelical," "post-conservative," "post-theological." Breathless runs to the future with finger to the wind did not serve us well. We hope for better from evangelicals seeking the center.

Gabriel Fackre

Andover Newton Theological School

Diekema, Anthony J. *Academic Freedom and Christian Scholarship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. Pp. 214. \$22.00.

Anthony J. Diekema, former president of Calvin College, makes a valuable contribution to the long and interesting history of academic freedom in American higher education. He builds on the existing foundations of academic freedom to create a contemporary edifice that combines his extensive experience as a college president, his sociological training in the tradition of

Durkheim (who sought to find a balance between individual and communal imperatives), and his Christian convictions. The result is a fresh examination of academic freedom that moves from definition to analysis to "modest proposals" for policy development in the Christian college.

In his forward, Calvin professor Edward E. Ericson, Jr. says that the author "boldly takes on both old and new threats to academic freedom. Diekema sharply challenges the failed modern nostrums and insupportable rigidities of the American Association of University Professors. . . . He is equally clear-eyed about the depredations of politically-correct postmodernists who cannot write the word *truth* without putting quotation marks around it. . . ." That is a good short summary of the reasoned middle-ground position toward which Diekema works. It reflects Durkheim's principle of balance between rights and responsibilities and between freedom and obligation. As Diekema says, "this book is a personal, interpretive, and didactic treatise on academic freedom through the eyes of a practitioner." Those who find this perspective and approach compelling will enjoy the reasoned and well-written assessment of academic freedom that follows.

Diekema begins his exploration of academic freedom with "the search for definition." This introductory chapter is wonderfully concise and provides the reader with a useful working definition not readily available in the "torturous literature" on the subject nor readily apparent to "a public that has little understanding of what is at stake." Equally enlightening is his following treatment of the "threats to academic freedom." Such threats include ideological imperialism, dogmatism, political correctness, intolerance of religion, censorship (including self-censorship), governmental restrictions, and institutional influence. The author argues for vigilance against such threats from inside and outside the institution and insists that the responsibility for such vigilance rests squarely with the academy itself. Academics, he declares, "must understand the nature of community and then set forth to establish and nurture a vigilant community and, ultimately, an ethos of freedom within it."

Having made the case for the nature of academic freedom, the threats that imperil it, and the responsibility for the academy to protect academic freedom within the bounds of the community of scholars, Diekema turns his attention to an extended analysis of academic freedom in the context of worldview. He says that "because all intellectual activity begins somewhere, with presuppositions and first principles, it is more honest and liberating to acknowledge and articulate one's worldview than to pretend it doesn't exist." He rejects the objectivity-rationalistic model that the academy (especially the A.A.U.P.) presumes to be operative and challenges the academy's assumption that faith in reason should predominate. Indeed, he insists that "there is as

much legitimacy in a worldview based upon Christian presuppositions (beliefs) as in a worldview based upon presuppositions (beliefs) of rationalism." This, then, is his central argument for the worldview that should have legitimacy in the Christian college.

Finally, Diekema sets forth his "modest proposals" to guide policy development in a Christian college. These proposals follow logically from his earlier analysis and call for colleges to hammer out specific definitions of academic freedom and related policies to govern faculty tenure. Faculty and administrators should work together to establish a range of policies to protect Christian scholarship, freedom of speech, and other essentials in a community of Christian scholars dedicated to preserving and promoting academic freedom. When colleges create an "ethos of freedom," the academy—whether Christian or secular—can provide the continuing nurture of that institution's academic freedom.

Academic Freedom and Christian Scholarship is an intelligent, thoughtful, practical, balanced, and timely re-examination of academic freedom. While Diekema's special emphasis, as the title of his book suggests, is on academic freedom in the Christian college, his work should be of interest to others inside and outside *academe*: professors in secular institutions, constitutional scholars, ministers—and anyone else who toils in the academic vineyard.

Thomas R. McDaniel
Converse College

Kim, Eunjoo Mary. *Preaching the Presence of God: A Homiletic from an Asian American Perspective*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1999. Pp. 163. \$16.00.

Mary Eunjoo Kim, who teaches preaching at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver, CO, earned her doctorate at Princeton Theological Seminary under Professors Tom Long and James Kay. Her dissertation analyzed the eschatological ethics of the Seminary's eminent and late Professor, Paul L. Lehmann.

Kim's book is useful for three areas of contemporary theological discourse. The first is, of course, homiletics itself. Her clear writing style is a model of public discourse. Further, she writes as one who knows how to preach, as this reviewer can testify, having invited her to preach at the Boston University School of Theology as part of our continuing "Preaching Forum."

Especially important is Kim's careful discussion of both congregational and hermeneutical ingredients of the homiletical enterprise. Not every ser-

mon will "preach" everywhere, no matter how gifted the preacher. Preaching, like politics, as the famed Boston politician Tip O'Neil put it, "is always local." And Kim's delineation of the relationship between "the world of the text and the world of the congregation" is particularly impressive. She reminds those of us who do preach that there is no straight or simple line from an English biblical text to a congregation, of whatever ethnic, linguistic, or national identity. Furthermore, there is in this volume a convincing witness to the importance of bilingual ability. Only by working across linguistic limitations does one become truly "fluent."

This brings us to the second area of significance of this brief volume: Asian-American spirituality and sensitivity. This reviewer has just completed editorial work on a Korean-English Service Book and Hymnal for both Presbyterian and Methodist congregations in this country. The need is clear in such a context to integrate two sorts of cultural pieties. Kim carefully and thoughtfully lays out Buddhist, Confucian, and Shamanistic pieties in relation to Christian convictions. Her readers will recognize her wisdom. But many of us will have to work very seriously with her challenges. The concerns of liturgists and homileticsians for "contextualization" and "indigenization" that Kim addresses from an Asian perspective inform the preacher's task in every time and place.

The third area of interest in this book has to do with theology itself. Kim's title includes the phrase "the presence of God." In sacramental and homiletical literature, even in a Reformed context, "presence" signals serious stuff! In Chapter 2, "A Theology of Preaching," she constructs a critical theological lens, combining eschatology, ecclesiology, and pneumatology under the rubric of "spiritual," for describing and evaluating preaching, particularly in the Korean context. Through this lens she is also able to identify tendencies in preaching toward authoritarianism, moralism, and hierarchialism. In this book she proposes a rhetoric of metaphorical and poetical language, and a "spiral" sort of structure rather than linear. She suggestively draws on the Confucian tradition's textual-interpretive process of "Quiet-sitting, repetition and memorization of the text, and calligraphy. . . ." Clearly, no one who takes this book to heart will ever preach the same way again.

One might quibble with certain stereotypical descriptions of "traditional Calvinists and contemporary fundamentalists," or of Barth and Bultmann as "kerygmatic," or worry about an uncritical reception of the hermeneutics of E. Schuessler Fiorenza, but the context of the critique makes these questions understandable.

Preaching the Presence of God should probably be on the bibliography of

every course on preaching in North American theological education. It is masterfully succinct. Not all textbooks are.

Horace T. Allen, Jr.
Boston University School of Theology

Gager, John. *Reinventing Paul*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Pp. 240. \$25.00.

Another book on Paul? Yes, the “new” Paul. Who is this “new” Paul? John Gager’s answer: the man whose mission has been distorted by twenty centuries of Pauline scholarship based on a faulty “old” paradigm influenced by anti-semitism. *Reinventing Paul* purports that the old paradigm wrongly interprets Paul as “convert from Judaism to Christianity, who preached against the law and Israel.” These views, the author states, have unwittingly been the result of traditionalists reading Augustine, Luther, and Post-Holocaust thinkers into the ancient texts. “For Paul,” Gager says, “Israel’s salvation was never in doubt. What he taught and preached was instead a special path, a ‘*Sonderweg*’ for Gentiles.” This intriguing premise is what Gager attempts to prove, joining the movement of New Testament scholars including Lloyd Gaston, Stanley Stowers, and Krister Stendahl who agree that “Paul’s undeniably negative comments were never directed at the role of the law for Jews but for Gentiles.”

Gager’s introduction offers a hermeneutics of “suspicion” to those who read “modern translations, dictionaries, and commentaries embedded within preexisting interpretations.” Five chapters follow, beginning with an interpretation of the old paradigm that redefines Paul as an “unreliable author.” Gager then offers a new paradigm for his writings, followed by an examination of Galatians and Romans respectively, and ending with Gager’s hopes for what is generally considered a minority opinion. He dismisses secondary biblical sources, restricts the arena for discussion to Paul’s letters to Galatia and Rome, and deflects Paul’s strongest rebukes toward the Jews onto the *Jewish Christians*, “missionaries within the Jesus movement.”

“Until the emergence of the new Paul, in recent decades,” Gager states, “the only readers who have been able to break free from the old Paul are the contradictionists—those who abandon all efforts to find a consistent meaning in Paul.” However, the new paradigm argument stands or falls not with the citing of New Testament scripture alone, but “almost entirely on the question of audience”: was Paul speaking to Gentiles *and* Jews? Gager assigns blame on this matter to traditionalist interpreters, arguing instead for “Paul’s unreliability” using an either/or filter to emphasize “contradictory” pro-

Israel and anti-Israel scriptures. He concludes that "standing against me are not merely twenty centuries of reading Paul as the father of Christian anti-Judaism, but the manifest tensions between the two sets of texts themselves." As a result, Gager insists that the reader must dig one level below this false dichotomy of new and old paradigms to find the essence of Paul's message.

Though a student of Meyer, Käsemann, and Dahl, Gager never penetrates the mystery of Paul's conversion: what caused the Pharisee trained by Gamaliel—likely the next high priest—to turn from his roots? Was he anti-semitic? No. His soliloquy in Romans 9–11 conveys an elegiac aide memoir to the Jews and their place in God's divine plan. Furthermore, Gager's study fails to note that beyond Jewish/Gentile issues, what Paul despised most was division: laws or people that poisoned the collective spirit of the early church, which to him was unequivocally "neither Jew nor Greek." His mission seems not as Gager argues, a *Sonderweg*, "a special path for Gentiles," but to broaden Jewish religious perception. Jewish Christians loyal to their Jewish roots, demanded that Gentiles be circumcised and Paul vehemently disagreed, raising the question that plagued the early Church and nearly ended Paul's ministry: would Christianity become a Jewish sect or a new religion?

Gager fails to recognize the potent allegations in Paul's "undeniably negative comments" that circumvent Jewish/Jewish-Christian distinctions, expressing his heartfelt beliefs touching the law and its effect on his converts. Paul referred to his antagonists as preaching "another gospel" and the Jewish law as "a curse," "enslavement," and even "death." He described his Judaism as a former life and his escape from its psychological grip as akin to a widow's liberation from her dead husband.

If we entertain Gager's notion that Paul's rebukes were solely for "Jewish Christians" who wanted Paul to insist on Gentile circumcision, how much more severe would the criticism have been for the Jews who were seeking his arrest?

Reinventing Paul, at times, reads like a reinvention itself. It is the opinion of this writer that Gager's ecumenical wish to heal old wounds of Jewish-Christian relations has come at the expense of biblical integrity and balanced exegesis. The search for common ground in this exciting dialogue would be better served by paying more careful attention to the textual evidence at hand.

Robert Orlando
Religious Studies Department
Columbia University

C. Clifton Black

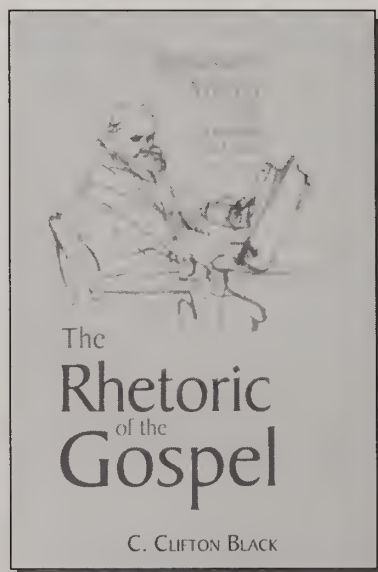
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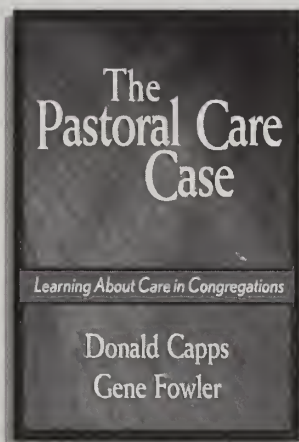
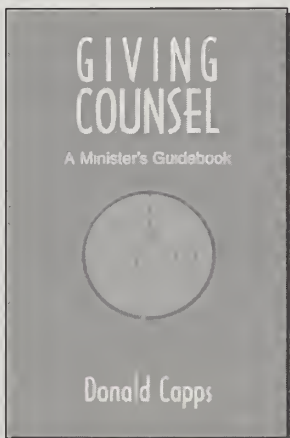
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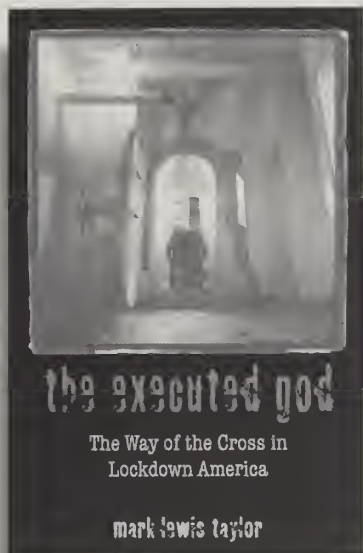
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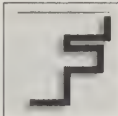
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